THE SECOND OF TWO VOLUMES

THIRD INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON BEDIUZZAMAN SAID NURSI

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY AND BEDIUZZAMAN SAID NURSI

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Preface
to the Second Volume

Due to the many requests we received from all over the world for the English translation of the book of the Third International Symposium on Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, we published previously the first thirty of the fifty-eight speeches and papers presented at the Symposium. We are pleased to now offer the second volume, containing the remaining twenty-eight papers. It is hoped that in later editions, the two volumes will be combined and published as a single volume. As in the first volume, the majority of the papers were in Turkish, some were in Arabic, and a small number in English. The original texts of the latter are given in the present volume. Turkish and Arabic editions of this Symposium book are also available.

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PROPHETHOOD, THE COMPANIONS OF THE PROPHET, SUFISM

God's Messenger (PBUH) in the Risale-i Nur

'Imaduddin Khalil

Introduction

Bediuzzaman allotted a great deal of space to God's Messenger (PBUH) in his writings, and attempted to analyze and illustrate various aspects of his life and practices. These discussions are concentrated in seven treatises or sections of the Risale-i Nur. They are the Nineteenth Word, On the Messengership of Muhammad (PBUH);[1] the section of the Twenty-Fourth Word which enumerates principles to assist in understanding Hadiths about the signs of the end of time and the merits and rewards of certain actions; the Thirty-First Word, about the Ascension of the Prophet (PBUH); the Nineteenth Letter, called The Miracles of Muhammad (PBUH); the Fourth Flash, called The Highway of the Practices of the Prophet ; the Eleventh Flash, called The Stairway of the Practices of the Prophet and Antidote for the Sickness of Innovations; the section of the Fifteenth Ray about the witnesses of Prophethood.[2] The subject is mentioned in numerous other parts of the Risale-i Nur.[3]

Prof. Dr. 'IMADUDDIN KHALIL

Professor 'Imaduddin Khalil was born in Mosul in 1939. He studied in Mosul, Baghdad, and Cairo, receiving his Ph.D., on Islamic history, in 1968 from Aynu'sh-Shams University, Egypt. Prof. Khalil has taught in many universities in the Islamic world and taken part in symposia and conferences in various countries. He has published more than forty books in the fields of Islamic thought, literature, history, and the history of philosophy. In his works he has laid emphasis on theory, criticism, and opening new doors in the world of thought. Some of his works have been translated into Turkish. Prof. Khalil now teaches in Mosul University in the Department of Islamic History and Critical Research.

1. See, Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Sözler*, Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1987, 219-27 / *The Words* [Eng. trans.], Sözler Publications 1992, 243-52.

2. See, Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Şualar*, Istanbul 1987; *Lem'alar*, Istanbul 1990 / *The Flashes Collection* [Eng. trans.], Sözler Publications 1995; *Mektûbat*, Istanbul 1990 / *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Letters 1928-1932* [Eng. trans.], Sözler Publications 1994.

3. See, a number of sections of the Tenth Word, Twenty-Fourth Letter, Thirteenth Flash; etc.

It is understood from the above that Bediuzzaman did not intend to write a biography of the Prophet (PBUH) or set forth detailed information about his Sunna or practices. He left such subjects to the historians and scholars of Hadith, who have researched them and produced a plethora of works. As he states at the end of his treatises in a way appropriate to the subject and in keeping with his purpose, he studied specific aspects of his biography. In other words, as is seen in all the other parts of the Risale-i Nur, he concentrated on its dimension which looks to belief, aiming to strengthen faith in the face of unbelief and atheism, which he said was his chief goal. This forced him to break the shell surrounding historical events, penetrate to the inner spirituality, pass over the apparent face of things and reach their essence; in short, to leave aside the externals in favour of their unseen inner face.

Someone who looks fairly at these lines will appreciate that four of the seven treatises mentioned above have been assigned to Hadiths of the God's Messenger (PBUH). The most extensive of these, in order, are the treatise on the Prophet's Ascension, The Miracles of Muhammad, the treatise on predictions about the Unseen, and the section about Hadiths related to the end of the world. These treatises concentrate for the greater part on spiritual dimensions. But the Miracles of Muhammad departs from this, and while discussing events lays emphasis on the meanings and signs concealed behind the apparent face.

In his works about God's Messenger (PBUH), Bediuzzaman did not employ the historical method or its rules and conditions. Similarly, he did not employ the method of the scholars of Hadith. He rather favoured a reflective and deductive method developed by himself, which he applied in all the pieces he wrote about the Prophet's life and practices. Since he used it not only when describing the Prophet's biography, but on a broad scale in all his treatises, I shall quote here a passage illustrating its importance:

> "... I shall mention a mark of Almighty God's favour and mercy which was apparent in the writing of this treatise, so that those who read it may understand its importance. I had no intention of writing this treatise, for the Nineteenth and Thirty-First Words[4] about the messengership of Muhammad (PBUH) had been written. Then suddenly I felt a compelling impulse to write it. Also my power of memory had been extinguished due to the calamities I had suffered. Moreover, in accordance with my way, I had not taken the path of narrative, that is, 'he said that,' 'it was said that,' in the works I had written. Furthermore, I had no books of Hadith or the Prophet's biography available to me. Nevertheless, saying: 'I place my trust in God,' I began. It was extremely successful, and my memory assisted me in a way that surpassed even that of the Old Said.[5] Thirty to forty pages were written at speed every two or three hours. Once fifteen pages were written in a single hour. It was mostly narrated from such books as Bukhari, Muslim, Bayhaqi, Tirmidhi, *Shifa' al-Sharif,* Abu Na'im, and Tabari. My heart was trembling, because if there had been any error in relating them —since they are Hadiths— it would have been a sin. But it was clear that Divine favour was with us and there was need for the treatise. God willing, what has been written is sound. If perhaps there are any errors in the wording of some of the Hadiths or in the names of the narrators, I request that my brothers will look on them tolerantly and correct them."[6]

4. The Thirty-First Word is about the Prophet's Ascension; the Nineteenth Word discusses various aspects of the Prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH).

5. 'The Old Said' is a name referring to Bediuzzaman in the period before 1926, when he began to write the Risale-i Nur. In the latter period, when he was known as 'the New Said,' he expended all his efforts to save religious belief.

I certainly agree with what the esteemed Edib Debbagh wrote in the introduction to the 1987 Arabic edition of the Miracles of Muhammad:

> "If we take note of the hundreds of Hadiths set forth in this work, we see clearly, since he (Bediuzzaman) dictated it from memory, how well founded was his knowledge of the science of Hadith and of the Prophet's biography and its events. We feel certain that he could evaluate the Hadiths accurately, without error, and understand easily even those which are allusive and figurative.
>
> "If we study the Hadiths in this estimable treatise,[7] our certainty increases that we are faced with miracles founded on authentic scholarly and methodological principles which cannot be criticized."[8]

The Subjects and Their Treatment

In this section, I shall describe in summary form the subjects Bediuzzaman discusses in his works *Sözler* (The Words), *Mektûbat* (Letters), and *Lem'alar* (The Flashes Collection), and give details of them in eight different sections.

1. The Messengership of Muhammad (PBUH)

The Nineteenth Word is divided into fourteen 'Droplets.'

The First Droplet is about the three main 'instructors' which make our Sustainer known to us. These are: the book of the universe, God's Messenger (PBUH), and the Qur'an. Here, the second evidence is focussed on; the other two are discussed in other parts of the Risale-i Nur.

The Second Droplet describes the evidences of the previous revealed scriptures, and the miracles and paranormal happenings that occurred before the Prophet Muhammad's mission, all of which confirmed it.

The Third Droplet mentions the chief aims of the Messenger's mission, exemplified by his answering the three disturbing questions: "Who are you?" "Where did you come from?" and, "What is you destination?"

The Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Droplets describe the great transformations which God's Messenger (PBUH) brought about through God's guidance and help.

The Eighth Droplet describes his extraordinary power in bringing about change in people. Making comparisons with similar feats, he points out that the people of philosophy and the Naturalists would be incapable of bringing about in a hundred years even a hundredth of what he achieved in a year.

6. *Mektûbat*, 179 / *Letters*, 235.

7. The Hadiths in this book were authenticated by Falāḥ 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Abdullāh; those wishing for further information about them may refer to the footnotes in the work.

8. *al-Mu'jizāt al-Aḥmadiyye*, Musul 1987, 11.

The Ninth Droplet mentions evidences for his complete faithfulness to his cause.

The Tenth Droplet alludes to the cosmic changes he predicted, and the Day of Judgement when everything will be overturned and all balances will change, and points out that these recall to man numerous truths connected with his life.

The following Droplets return to the subject of the Prophet's faithfulness, mentioning the witnesses to this.

The Twelfth and Thirteenth Droplets point out that God's Messenger (PBUH) is a certain proof of the resurrection of the dead and eternal happiness, and that with his guidance is a means of attaining that happiness. Moreover, due to his prayer and supplication, he is the reason for the creation of eternal happiness; he is "the pride of the human race ... this unique being who is truly the glory of the cosmos."

The final Droplet is the most comprehensive and stresses that the Qur'an is the greatest miracle of Muhammad's (PBUH) messengership.

With the truths and details of the above fourteen Droplets, Bediuzzaman went beyond the generally followed method. Moreover, unrestricted by any measure of time, he mentioned very few of the events here. His chief aim was to investigate the true purposes of prophethood, the principles that came with it and the essence of its ideas, and the fundamental aspects of the changes which it brought about. In doing this, Bediuzzaman had recourse to analysis and deduction of the reason and conscience. He provided numerous examples and made numerous comparisons. And while doing this, he used exceptional language in all the expressions and constructions he used, both illustrative and allusive.

Here, in the part assigned to God's Messenger (PBUH) and his messengership, Bediuzzaman passes to another aspect of his life, which is the distant aspect which looks to the Unseen. Sometimes when dealing with this, he has recourse to eminent sufis and spiritual leaders of Islam like Ghazzali, Bistami, and 'Abd al-Qadir Gilani.[9]

If one may say so, Bediuzzaman does not suffice with the visible part of the iceberg, for if one can see a tenth of it, nine tenths are hidden beneath the water. Because in order to reach the complete truth, the whole of it has to be seen.

The treatise on the Messengership of Muhammad (PBUH) is a comprehensive and swift journey through the world of prophethood and God's Messenger (PBUH). The details have been left aside; only the essence, basic transformations, and supreme duties have been mentioned. The Messenger is a guide taking people to God; his messengership testifies to this; his chief aims and the greatest changes he brought about; his power to cause change; his total veracity; humanity and the universe; his desire to save people. In Bediuzzaman's view, the Qur'an is the most powerful witness of the Messengership of Muhammad (PBUH).

Differently to the others, these striking statements head the sections in which

9. *Sözler*, 224 / *The Words*, 249.

Bediuzzaman discusses God's Messenger (PBUH). He does not concentrate on a single question or study a single subject in depth. For this reason this first of his treatises we are considering gives an adequate idea of all of them. It forms a concise introduction to the other sections we shall deal with in order.

2. Hadiths about the End of the World and the merits of certain actions

In the Third Branch of the Twenty-Fourth Word Bediuzzaman discusses the signs of the Last Day and Hadiths about them, and Hadiths about the merits of certain actions. He gives his reasons for this as follows:

> "Since the Hadiths that speak of the signs of the Last Day, the events at the end of time, and the merits and rewards of certain actions have not been well understood, some scholars who rely on their reasons have pronounced some of them to be either weak or false. While some of the scholars whose belief is weak but whose egotism strong have gone as far as denying them."[10]

Here, in order to point out a way of understanding the Hadiths under discussion, Bediuzzaman does not want to enter into detailed discussion, but to draw attention to a number of principles and general rules. In the previous section it was mentioned that Bediuzzaman did not employ the usual method followed by the historians. Here too he left aside the way of the scholars of Hadith and in its place used reasoned evidence, inference, and deduction. This style is based sometimes on the witnessing of the reason, sometimes on the witnessing of the emotions, and sometimes on the witnessing of the spirit and conscience. In all these situations he sets out before the reader perfectly clear truths as sharp as a sword. In the First Principle, he introduces principles and general rules for understanding certain Hadiths:

> "Religion is an examination, a test, which distinguishes elevated spirits from base ones. It therefore speaks of matters that everyone will see with their own eyes in the future in such a way that they remain neither altogether unknown, nor self-evident so that everyone would be compelled to confirm them. They open the door to the reason but do not take the will from the hand. For if a sign of the Last Day was completely self-evident and everyone was compelled to affirm it, someone with a disposition like coal would remain equal to someone with a diamond-like disposition. The mystery of accountability and results of examination would go for nothing. It is because of this that there has been much dispute over many matters like those of the Mahdi and Sufyan. Also, the narrations differ greatly; they have become contradictory statements."

While in the Second Principle, he says this:

> "There are levels in the matters of Islam. If one requires certain proof, for another the prevailing opinion is sufficient. While others merely require assent and acceptance and not to be rejected. In which case, secondary matters or particular events in time which are not among the bases of belief do not require certain compliance and definite proof; they require only not to be rejected, and to be submitted to, and not to be interfered with."[11]

10. *Sözler*, 316 / *The Words*, 350.
11. *Sözler*, 316 / *The Words*, 350.

Having elucidated these two essential points, Bediuzzaman puts forward another principle. He mentions reasons like 'Isra'iliyat' infiltrating Islamic thought; some of things written by the narrators of Hadiths and their interpretations of them being confused with the texts themselves; and some of the inspirations received by scholars of Hadith who were 'people of sainthood' or diviners of the realities of creation being thought to be Hadiths. He says, moreover, that there are stories so well-know they have become proverbial, and the true meanings of these are ignored where they should be considered in the light of their intended meanings. Stories of this kind were used by God's Messenger (PBUH), and if there are errors in their meanings, these should be ascribed to custom and usage, and not to the Hadiths. As far as possible Bediuzzaman avoids detailed discussion of the Unseen (the past and future) and its events and conditions, yet he discusses them at length and draws attention to them. Great or small, he uses every matter to prove his point and persuade those he is addressing. He draws attention to the following question:

> "The results of some of the questions of belief look to this restricted and narrow world; while others look to the world of the hereafter, which is broad and absolute. In order to have the desired effect of either encouraging or restraining, some Hadiths about the merits and rewards of actions are in an eloquent style, and some unthinking people have supposed them to be exaggerated. However, since they are all pure truth and reality, there is no exaggeration or overstatement in them. For instance, there is this Hadith which has worried the heads of the unfair more than any. Its meaning is: 'If the world had as much value as a fly's wing for Almighty God, the unbelievers would not have had so much as a mouthful of water from it.'"[12, 13]

In another Principle, he says: "Just as the Qur'an has obscure verses which are in need of interpretation or else require absolute submission, Hadiths also contain difficulties like the obscurities of the Qur'an. They are sometimes in need of extremely careful expounding and interpretation."[14]

Finally, he makes a comparison which is no less important than those preceding it:

> "Since prophethood, the affirmation of Divine unity, and belief all look to unity, the hereafter, and Divinity, they see truth and reality in accordance with those. While since philosophers and scientists look to multiplicity, causes, and nature, they see in accordance with them. The two points of view are extremely distant from one another."[15]

3. The Ascension of the Prophet (PBUH)

This subject is discussed extensively in thirty or so pages in the part of the Risale-i Nur called the Thirty-First Word. Since it is "a question that results from the essentials and pillars of belief, and follows on after them, and is a light that

12. This is a sound Hadith, authenticated by *Tirmidhī*, Tuḥfa, 2422; Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā'*, iii, 253; *al-Ḥākim*, iv, 306.
13. *Sözler*, 320 / *The Words*, 355.
14. *Sözler*, 324 / *The Words*, 359.
15. *Sözler*, 324 / *The Words*, 360.

draws strength from the lights of the pillars of belief," Bediuzzaman pays particular attention to it. He says that

> "The Ascension cannot be proved independently to irreligious atheists who do not accept the pillars of belief, because it cannot be discussed with those who neither know God, nor recognize His Messenger, nor accept the angels, and who deny the existence of the heavens. Firstly those pillars must be proved. Since this is the case, we shall address the discussion to a believer who, since he considers it unlikely, has misgivings about the Ascension; we shall explain it to him. However, from time to time we shall take into account the atheist who is the position of listener and shall set forth the matter to him."[16]

Bediuzzaman says that the reality of the Ascension has been examined in various parts of his works, but here his intention is "to unite all those different flashes with the essence of the truth, and with all of them form a mirror to the beauty of the perfections of Muhammad (Upon whom be blessings and peace)."[17]

Bediuzzaman penetrates from the outward face of verses to their realities and inner dimensions, and apart from one place where he quotes a Hadith authenticated by Imam Ahmad and Tirmidhi,[18] he does not rely on narrations about the Prophet. Moreover, he does not have recourse to historical narrations set out at length in the books on the Prophet's biography, even if they are true. At the same time, he gives the two passages from the Qur'an[19] where the event in question is mentioned with this aim. And behind all these, he bears in mind the principles of the sciences of Hadith and history, constructing his analyses and deductions on them. He uses matters that are agreed upon to grasp the realities which lie concealed behind the apparent face of events, so as to enquire into their true nature.

This treatise is divided into four sections and in each he approaches the question from its apparent face. In the first he explains the reason for the Ascension's necessity; in the second, the reality of the Ascension; in the third, the reason and purpose of the Ascension; and in the fourth, the fruits and benefits of the Ascension. In all these Bediuzzaman displays openly his skill at analysis and deduction. He gives numerous examples in order to bring distant truths close in a way appealing to the reader's power of imagination and to their ears. Similarly, he divides the subject into parts, dealing with them in different sections, asking interesting questions, voicing objections, and answering each in turn. Sometimes he puts it in the form of a debate or conversation, analyzing the question from an intellectual angle down to the finest details.

Thus, in summary, he says the following about the reasons for the Ascension's necessity:

> "A king has two sorts of interviewing, conversation, and discussion at his disposal, and two modes of address and favour. The first is to converse with a common subject about a particular matter and special need by means of a private telephone.

16. *Sözler*, 524 / *The Words*, 583.
17. *Sözler*, 524 / *The Words*, 583.
18. *Sözler*, 534 / *The Words*, 595.
19. Qur'an, 17:1; 53:4-18.

The second, under the title of august sovereignty, in the name of supreme kingship, with the dignity of universal rule, and with the aim of publishing and promulgating his commands, is to converse and speak through an envoy connected to those matters or by means of a high official related to those commands..."

"... The Creator of the universe, the Lord of all things with their apparent and inner faces, the Sovereign of Pre-Eternity and Post-Eternity, has two modes of conversing, speaking, and favouring. The first is particular and private, the other universal and general. Thus, the Ascension was a manifestation of the Sainthood of Muhammad (PBUH) in the form of a universality and exaltedness superior to all other sainthood. It was being honoured by God Almighty's conversation and address through His Name of Sustainer of All the Universe and title of Creator of All Beings."[20]

The reality of the Ascension he expounds like this:

"It consisted of the journeying of the person of Muhammad (PBUH) through the degrees of perfection. That is to say, through the different Names and titles He makes manifest in the disposition of creatures, God Almighty showed His special servant all the works of His dominicality which He displays in the spheres, creation, and regulation of its sovereignty, and in the levels of the heavens within those spheres, each of which is the means to a seat of dominicality and centre for the disposal of power.

"In order to make that servant both embrace all human perfections, and display all the Divine manifestations, and view all the levels of the universe, and to make him the herald of the sovereignty of dominicality and the proclaimer of those things pleasing to God and the solver of the talisman of the universe, He mounted him on Buraq, caused him to flash through the heavens like lightning traversing all its levels, observe Divine dominicality from mansion to mansion like the moon, and from sphere to sphere, and showing him each of the prophets, his brothers, whose abodes are in the heavens of those spheres, He raised him to the station of *a distance of two bow-lengths* and displayed to him His Oneness and His Word and the vision of Himself."[21]

As for the wisdom and purpose of the Ascension, it "is so exalted that human thought cannot comprehend it. It is so profound that human thought cannot reach it, and so subtle and fine that the intellect cannot see it by itself."[22] Yet, as he always does, Bediuzzaman asks questions, and providing examples, gives answers which are perfectly clear. If those listening do so as though hearing it from him directly, they will understand this clearly. We may give the following passage to illustrate Bediuzzaman's views on the purpose of the Ascension:

"The most lovable and elevated among the works of art are animate beings. And the most lovable and elevated among animate beings are conscious beings. And by reason of their comprehensiveness, the most lovable among conscious beings are to be found among human beings. The most lovable individual among human beings is the one who has most fully developed his potentiality and displayed the samples within it of the perfections manifested in all creatures and spread among them.

20. *Sözler*, 526 / *The Words*, 586.
21. *Sözler*, 528 / *The Words*, 588.
22. *Sözler*, 536 / *The Words*, 598.

"Thus, in order to see at one point and in one mirror all the varieties of His love spread through all creatures and to display, through the mystery of His Oneness, all the varieties of His beauty, the Maker of beings will take a person so high as to be a luminous fruit of the tree of creation and whose heart is like a seed containing the essential truths of that tree, and will demonstrate the belovedness of that individual, who represents the universe, through an Ascension like a thread linking the seed, which is the origin, with the fruit, which is the end. He will draw him to His presence and honour him with the beauty of the vision of Himself. And, in order to cause him to spread that sacred state to others, He will favour him with His Word and entrust him with His Decree."[23]

Bediuzzaman describes five fruits and benefits of the Ascension, which are: "to see as though they were visible the truths of the pillars of belief and to behold as though they were visible the angels, Paradise, the hereafter, and even the All-Glorious One;" the bringing "to jinn and man as a gift the fundamentals of Islam, and first and foremost the prescribed prayers, which constitute those things pleasing to the Sustainer, the Ruler of Pre-Eternity and Post-Eternity, Who is the Maker of beings, Owner of the universe, and Sustainer of all the worlds;" he saw "the treasury of eternal happiness, obtained the key, and brought it as a gift to jinn and men;" "just as he himself sampled the fruit of the vision of Divine beauty, so did he also bring it as a gift to jinn and men, which is that it is attainable by all believers;" "man's being the precious fruit of the universe and the petted beloved of the Maker of the universe was understood through the Ascension, and he brought this fruit to jinn and men."[24]

All dispute and argument about the nature of the Ascension was settled by Said Nursi's ideas, as it is by Islam.

From the time the affirmation of Divine unity was proclaimed in a single stage by God's Book and the Trustworthy Prophet (PBUH) to the present, the Muslim conscience has been tranquil, since it removed the dualism between the spirit and body, and put a stop to fragmentation and division; the religion of Islam brought the profession of Divine unity so that mutual relations between people could be balanced.

Having attained such certainty, by virtue of continuous good intention and purpose, it is not possible to deviate from the straight path even a little. Nevertheless, good intention may not always keep one on that way. The Islamic view, which is founded on firm foundations, is far superior to other views and beliefs. This religion came in order to be practised by men. All acts that are in accordance with it, every truth that emerges from it, every principle proceeding from its incomparable interwovenness and which is poured into the great pool of the affirmation of Divine unity, — these are all elements binding together the spirit and the body, the conscience and the mind, the seen and the unseen.

If it occurs to us even for an instant that this world and the universe and its beings are one-sided or one-dimensional, we cannot be true Muslims. For

23. *Sözler*, 536-8 / *The Words*, 599.
24. *Sözler*, 544-6 / *The Words*, 608-10.

beyond that single side are innumerable facets, and beyond that single dimension are innumerable dimensions.

As Muslims, our exceptional position vis-à-vis other beliefs and religions stems from this. Furthermore, these are truths which Bediuzzaman sought to describe, penetrating to their meanings and allusions from outward appearances.

4. The Miracles of Muhammad (PBUH)

Discussion of the Miracles of Muhammad (PBUH) may be much extended, for they have been investigated by many people in many works. Unlike some other subjects, the events of the era of the Prophet (PBUH) are not a closed question.

Those who find in God's Book the supreme miracle, which in all times and places presents an active, affirmative view, and who confirm that it contains nothing that is false or futile and that God will always preserve it; they observe a miraculousness in all of its verses, sections, and suras in this respect or in respect of life, existence, or of human advances and their final point; those who consider its styles and contents to be on the same level and believe that it cannot be the work of anyone other than One All-Wise and All-Knowing, far exceeding human power and far superior to anything men could say; those who having seen these truths act in accordance with them, and neglecting it neither morning nor evening, consider it unnecessary to seek any other miracles, even insignificant and ineffectual ones.

All their endeavours, then, have been focussed on Islam's opposing the attacks against it with its array of wonders and miracles —contrary to former religions and messengers. Without doubt the Qur'an has won an overwhelming victory on its own, and will continue to do so. The Qur'an itself alludes to this truth in many places and corroborates it: "*And We refrain from sending the signs, only because the men of former generations treated them as false.*"[25] Human consciousness has developed in the course of time and man's store of knowledge has increased: "*Soon will We show them Our signs in the [furthest] regions [of the earth], and in their own selves, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth.*"[26] "*Nay, they charge with falsehood that whose knowledge they cannot compass, even before the elucidation thereof has reached them; thus did those before them make charges of falsehood.*"[27]

All this is true. Also its testimony to the era of the Prophet (PBUH) is true. In order to confirm God's Messenger (PBUH), rout his enemies, exalt him, or for similar reasons, it occasionally draws attention to his miracles, which overturned the known laws of nature. Thus, those temporal miracles corroborate the Qur'an, the supreme miracle. It is seen therefore that there is no break and lack of communication between them. The angels joining in the Battle of Badr to assist the Muslims in their inferior position shows this clearly.

25. Qur'an, 17:59.
26. Qur'an, 41:53.
27. Qur'an, 10:39.

What is more important than anything is a person not overstepping his mark and trying to exceed the reasonable and harmonious bounds of the Prophet's biography. He should not put forward ideas about any aspect of it which he has forgotten or which has remained closed to him.

No fair-minded person should refrain from observing the above facts, which is the custom as well as being obvious. It is seen that here Bediuzzaman acts in accordance with the dictates of reason. In all his treatises he bears in mind the inner face of events as well as their outer appearances, and tries to penetrate their unseen aspects. It is therefore not surprising that he dwells at length on the miracles of Muhammad (PBUH) in particular, among the events and details of his life and practices. Just as he does when dealing with the questions of the Ascension and predictions about the Unseen and the end of the world, and subjects like the attributes of prophethood and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Then, and this is most important, he bases his observations about the miracles on sound Hadiths rather than the writings of the storytellers, narrators, and historians. Moreover, apart from a very few limited instances, he does not have recourse to weak Hadiths. So if it is a narration concerning the Prophet's practices about which there is no consensus, the reader has the right not to accept the miracle described. However, in the majority of cases Bediuzzaman relies on the criteria of the scholars of Hadith. Our duty, therefore, is to accept them, or if they oppose the clear statements of the Qur'an, disregard them. However, if appropriate, we may interpret such Hadiths so that messengership and God's Messenger (PBUH) are poured into the ocean of absolute faithfulness. As Bediuzzaman himself pointed out, we should always bear in mind that very many of the wonders that proceeded from God's Messenger (PBUH) were not miracles, but wonder-working or "Divine favours" or "banquets bestowed by the Most Merciful One."[28]

Another important point is that when discussing the miracles we mentioned above, he does not make them the main aim of what he is saying, and does not treat haphazardly Hadiths of high worth in regard to the Prophet's life and person, with their various aspects. The events of that time have to be studied within the framework of particular limitations, and the causes, conditions, and understandings have to be well appreciated. At the same time, the Prophet's (PBUH) miracles are not sufficient. The field encompassing the outer aspects of the Qur'an, a vast ocean and comprehensive sphere, is truly very limited. Here are found subjects like belief and action related to actual events, human characteristics, comprehension, attempting causes, the occurrence of incidents, Divine power being concealed in the world, and history.

Thus, in his treatise called The Miracles of Muhammad, which is the Nineteenth Letter, Bediuzzaman looks in balanced fashion behind the apparent face of events. Because of its importance, the treatise (together with its addenda) is nearly 150 pages in length. Being assigned to subjects from the Prophet's life and practices, it is his longest treatise. He attempted while dealing with this

28. *Mektûbat*, 121 / *Letters*, 165.

extensive subject, to spread it over a broad area. He mentions more than three hundred of the miracles that occurred in the Era of the Prophet. He assigns a different group to each of the sections, as he does in all his treatises. It consists of nineteen 'Signs.' The first four enumerate principles, explanations, and necessary criteria that should be borne in mind in connection with miracles. These 'Signs' therefore hold greater importance than the others, for they dispel many points of confusion, and some doubts, suspicions, and delusions. Offering a balanced way of reaching a conclusion, they prevent deviant understandings of Hadiths of this sort.

According to Bediuzzaman,

> "Miracles are the confirmation by the Creator of the cosmos of his declaration of prophethood; they have the effect of the words, 'You have spoken truly!'"[29]
>
> "However, the evidences of the veracity of this being and the proofs of his prophethood are not restricted to his miracles. All his deeds and acts, his words and behaviour, his moral conduct and manners, his character and appearance prove to the attentive his truthfulness and seriousness. ... And hundreds of thousands of men with varying opinions have affirmed his prophethood in an equal number of ways. The Wise Qur'an alone demonstrates a thousand of the proofs of his prophethood, in addition to its own forty aspects of miraculousness."[30]

Bediuzzaman says there are two categories of evidences of prophethood:

> "***The First*** is called *irhasat* and includes the paranormal events that happened at the time of his birth, or before his prophetic mission.
>
> "***The Second*** group pertains to all the remaining evidences of his prophethood, and contains two subdivisions:
>
> "**The first** are those wonders that were manifested after his departure from this world in order to confirm his prophethood, and **the second,** those that he exhibited during the era of his prophethood. The latter has also two parts:
>
> "**The first**, the evidences of his prophethood that became manifest in his own personality, his inner and outer being, his moral conduct and perfections, and **the second**, the miracles manifested in the outer world. The last part again has two branches:
>
> "**One**, those concerning the Qur'an and spirituality, and **the other,** those relating to materiality and the universe. This last branch is again divided into two categories:
>
> "**The first** involves the paranormal happenings that occurred during his mission either to break the stubbornness of the unbelievers, or to augment the faith of the believers. This category has twenty different sorts, such as the splitting of the moon, the flowing of water from his fingers, the satisfying of large numbers with a little food, and the speaking of trees, rocks and animals. Each of these sorts has also many instances, and thus has, in meaning, the strength of confirmation by consensus. As for **the second category**, this includes events lying in the future that occurred as he had predicted upon God's instructions."[31]

29. *Mektûbat*, 83 / *Letters*, 119.
30. *Mektûbat*, 83 / *Letters*, 119.
31. *Mektûbat*, 84-5 / *Letters*, 121-2.

Bediuzzaman says that although all the conduct and actions of God's Messenger (PBUH) testified to his messengership, they did not all have to be miraculous:

> "For God Almighty sent him in the form of a human being so that he might be a guide and leader to human beings in their social affairs, and in the acts and deeds by means of which they attain happiness in both worlds; and so that he might disclose to human beings the wonders of Divine art and His disposive power that underlie all occurrences and are in appearance customary, but in reality are miracles of Divine power. ... For, in accordance with the purpose of the examinations and trials that man is to undergo, the way must be shown to him without depriving him of his free will: the door of the intelligence must remain open, and its freedom must not be snatched from its hand. But if miracles had occurred in so apparent a way, intelligence would have had no choice..."[32]

The great majority of the accounts that have come down to us about the Messenger's (PBUH) miracles and the evidences of his prophethood, have been unanimously reported. Bediuzzaman says there are two sorts of unanimous report:

> "One is those reports about which there is 'explicit consensus,' the other is 'consensus in meaning.' The latter is also of two kinds: the first includes those concerning which the consensus is implied 'by silence.' ... The second kind of 'consensus in meaning' is that which occurs when different people relate a particular incident...
>
> "Most of the reports concerning the miracles and the evidences of the prophethood of the Most Noble Messenger (Upon whom be blessings and peace) that have come down to us are either of the category of 'explicit consensus,' or 'consensus in meaning,' or 'consensus implied by silence.' As for the others, although they are the report of a single person, they also have the certainty of 'consensus' as they have received the acceptance of the meticulous authorities on Hadith."[33]

The following is not the final matter, but it is the last we shall mention here and is related to Bediuzzaman's method:

> "Although some qualities and aspects of the Most Noble Messenger (Upon whom be blessings and peace) have been described in books of history and biography, most of those qualities relate to his humanity. But in reality, the spiritual personality and the sacred nature of this blessed being are so exalted and luminous that the qualities described in books fall short of his high stature. ...
>
> "In order not to proceed in error, one should raise his head beyond the ordinary qualities of the Prophet (PBUH) that pertain to his participation in the human state, and behold instead his true nature and luminous stature that pertain to the rank of messengership. Otherwise, one will either show him irreverence, or instil doubts in oneself."[34]

32. *Mektûbat*, 85 / *Letters*, 122.
33. *Mektûbat*, 87 / *Letters*, 124.
34. *Mektûbat*, 89 / *Letters*, 127-8.

5. The Highway of the Practices of the Prophet

This treatise is the Fourth Flash. Bediuzzaman named this piece The Highway of the Practices of the Prophet because it explains concisely love for the Prophet's Family, and with the excesses in this in later periods, the division between the Sunnis and Shi'a. This is a question with historical dimensions, and in regard to time, is outside the Prophet's life and practices, but due to its connections with them and the Qur'an, it was examined by Bediuzzaman together with some other questions.

Bediuzzaman cites two verses as testimony:

> *Now has come a prophet from among yourselves; it heavily weighs upon him that you might suffer; full of concern is he for you, and full of compassion and mercy towards the believers. * But if they turn away, say: God is enough for me, there is no god but He. In Him have I placed my trust, for He is the Sustainer of the Mighty Throne.*[35] * *Say: I ask no recompense of you save love of close kin.*[36]

Bediuzzaman passes from the general to the particular in the light of the above verses:

> "Among the universal and general duties of his prophethood, God's Messenger (Peace and blessings be upon him) displayed great compassion in certain particular, minor matters. ... For example, the extraordinary compassion the Messenger (PBUH) showed towards Hasan and Husayn in their childhood and the great importance he gave them was not only due to love arising from natural kindness and family feeling, it was rather because they were each the tip of a luminous thread of the function of prophethood, and the source, sample, and index of a community of great consequence which would receive the legacy of prophethood."

Bediuzzaman does not remain in the time of the Prophet but turns to the period of the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs and those that followed them, which saw the beginning of the splits in the community. He describes the best way to follow like this:

> "Too much or too little of anything is not good. Moderation is the middle way, and that is the way the Sunnis have chosen. But, alas, like Kharijite ideas have infiltrated the Sunnis to an extent, so also addicts of politics and some atheists criticize 'Ali. ... And so, O Sunnis, who are the People of Truth, and 'Alawis, whose way is love of the Prophet's Family! Quickly put an end to this meaningless, disloyal, unjust, and harmful dispute between you!"[37]

6. Predictions about the Unseen

In the Seventh Flash, which is eleven pages in length, Bediuzzaman describes seven sorts of predictions about the Unseen. There is no direct connection with the Prophet's (PBUH) life. He expounds the last two verses of Sura al-Fath, which mention the Messenger's dream about entering the Masjid al-Haram and

35. Qur'an, 9:128-9.
36. Qur'an, 42:23.
37. *Lem'alar*, 25-6 / *The Flashes Collection*, 36, 43.

God confirming this; Islam being proclaimed over all religions; and some of the attributes of the Messenger (PBUH) and his Companions.

Here, Bediuzzaman puts himself before history, that is, the events of the Prophet's life which the verse mentions, and speaks of a generation raised and trained by God's Messenger (Peace and blessings be upon him). While doing this, he does not consider it necessary to refer to the sources of the Prophet's life and the immediate reasons for the verses' revelation; as in many places, relying on his own store of knowledge and accurate memory, he makes various analyses.

Bediuzzaman mentions a number of aspects of miraculousness in this concise treatise:

> "[The vision] gave certain news of the conquest of Mecca before it happened. It occurred two years later just as predicted. ... for sure the Peace of Hudaybiya was apparently opposed to the interests of Islam and the Quraysh were victorious to an extent, but it is giving news that in reality it would be a great victory and the key to further conquests. For although with the Peace of Hudaybiya the physical sword was temporarily hung up, the flashing diamond sword of the Qur'an was unsheathed, and it conquered minds and hearts. Through the truce, the two sides mixed with one another. The virtues of Islam and lights of the Qur'an rent the veils of obduracy and tribalism, and enacted their decrees. ... However at that time the majority of the nomadic peoples of the Arabian Peninsula were hostile, and most of the environs of Mecca and the tribe of Quraysh, enemies. Through predicting that 'Soon you shall circumambulate the Ka'ba without fear,' it was indicating and foretelling that the Arabian Peninsula would submit and all the Quraysh enter Islam and total security be established. And it all occurred exactly as predicted. ... at that time Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism had hundreds of millions of adherents and were the official religions of world-dominant states like Rome, China, and Persia, which had hundreds of millions of subjects, and Muhammad the Arabian was unable to subdue his own small tribe even. Yet it is foretelling that the religion he brought would triumph over all religions and be victorious over all states. And it does this in most clear and definite manner. The future confirmed this prediction, with the sword of Islam extending from the Pacific Ocean in the East to the Atlantic Ocean in the West. ... Through telling of the elevated qualities and characteristics which were the reason for the Companions being the most elevated of human kind after the prophets, the start of this verse describes through its explicit meaning the excellent qualities which would mark out that group. While through its implied meaning, the verse alludes to the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, who would succeed to the office of the Prophet (PBUH) after his death through the institution of the Caliphate, and gives news of the fine attributes which were what most distinguished each of them and marked them out. ... It gives news of the qualities of the Companions mentioned in the Torah, which was as though the Unseen for an unlettered person like the Prophet (Upon whom be blessings and peace)."

Previous to this, Bediuzzaman asks the following question:

> "What was the wisdom in the defeats of the Companions of God's Messenger (Upon whom be blessings and peace), the Glory of the World and Beloved of the Sustainer of All the Worlds, against the idolators at the end of Uhud and beginning of Hunayn?"

And he replies, before expounding the verse in question, by citing some historical evidences:

> "Among the idolators were many persons like Khalid who in the future would be equal to the leading Companions of that time. Therefore, so as not to degrade them entirely in the view of the future, which for them would be glorious and honourable, Divine wisdom gave them in the past immediate recompense for their future good works and did not completely destroy their pride. That is to say, the Companions of the past were defeated by the Companions of the future, so that the future Companions would enter Islam, not through fear of the flashing sword, but through zeal for the flash of truth, and so that they and their natural valour should not be brought low."[38]

Personally I do not agree with Bediuzzaman's conclusion here. In my opinion, their being defeated at Uhud and at the beginning of Hunayn was tied to an historical law, as the Qur'an itself says. In accordance with Divine will and some laws of historical progression, they were routed on various occasions. For if they wanted to conquer their enemies in truth and be victorious on the face of the earth, they had to gain a better understanding of these laws, and following them closely, carry out what they required.

7. The Stairway of the Practices of the Prophet and Antidote for the Sickness of Innovations

This is the final treatise Bediuzzaman allotted to the life of God's Messenger (PBUH) and his practices (*Sunna*).[39] In it he successively urges adhering sincerely to the Prophet's practices, for which he puts forward certain principles and draws a number of conclusions. His call begins with the following verses of the Qur'an:

> *Now has come to you a Prophet from among yourselves; it grieves him that you should perish; ardently anxious is he over you; to the believers is he most kind and merciful.. * But if they turn away, say: "God suffices me, there is no god but He; in Him do I place my trust—He the Sustainer of the Throne [of Glory] Supreme!"*[40] * *Say: "If you do love God, follow me: God will love you and forgive you your sins; for God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."*[41]

There are probably hundreds of questions that could be discussed in the light of these verses, but Bediuzzaman concentrated on eleven. He uses the Qur'an as evidence and testimony for these matters, and at the same time mentions a number of Hadiths. In two places he also quotes from religious figures, one of whom is the Regenerator of Religion Shaykh Ahmad al-Faruqi al-Sirhindi (971/1563-4—1034/1624-5). Only, for the most part he makes extensive analyses and deductions, and sometimes uses logic and reasoned argument illustrated with his own personal experiences.

38. *Lem'alar*, 29 / *The Flashes Collection*, 46.
39. *Lem'alar*, 50-62 / *The Flashes Collection*, 80-93.
40. Qur'an, 9:128-9.
41. Qur'an, 3:31.

Bediuzzaman stresses in particular the high value of following the Prophet's practices when the Muslim community is corrupted and innovations are rife. Only in my opinion, faithful and sincere adherence to the Prophet's practices has no connection with the "antidote for the sickness of innovations," as it says in the title at the beginning of the treatise. He reaches the conclusion:

> "Following the Practices directly recalls the Noble Prophet (Upon whom be blessings and peace), and that recollection and remembrance is transformed into recollection of the Divine Presence. The moment the Practices are complied with in even the least significant dealings, in the conduct of eating, drinking, or sleeping, such habitual, natural acts become meritorious acts of worship in compliance with the Shari'a. ... And so, due to this mystery, one who makes it his practice to follow the Practices of the Prophet (PBUH) transforms all his actions into worship, and may make his whole life fruitful and yielding of reward."[42]

Bediuzzaman describes following the practices as:

> "...like *qibla*-directing compasses showing the course to be followed in ships, each of the matters of the Practices, and even small points of conduct, were like electric switches among innumerable hazardous, dark ways."[43]

He dwells particularly on the verse: *Say: "If you do love God, follow me: God will love you and forgive you your sins; for God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful,*[44] saying:

> "[This verse] proclaims in definite fashion just how necessary and important it is to follow the Practices of the Prophet (PBUH). Yes, among the syllogisms of logic, this verse is the most powerful and certain of the sort called hypothetical or conditional syllogisms. ... the above verse says: If you love God, you will follow God's Beloved. If you do not follow him, it points to the conclusion that you do not love God. If a person loves God, it entails following the Practices of God's Beloved."[45]
>
> "The Practices of the Prophet (PBUH) are courtesy. There is no matter among them beneath which a light, and courtesy, is not to be found. God's Messenger (Upon whom be blessings and peace) said: "*My Sustainer taught me good conduct, and how well he taught me.*"[46] Yes, one who studies the Prophet's biography and knows his Practices will certainly understand that Almighty God gathered together in His Beloved all the varieties of courtesy and good conduct. One who gives up the Practices abandons courtesy."[47]

Bediuzzaman says about himself that:

> "I have observed and experienced perhaps a thousand times in my own self that the principles and matters of the Shari'a and Practices of the Prophet (PBUH) are

42. *Lem'alar*, 50-1 / *The Flashes Collection*, 81.
43. *Lem'alar*, 51 / *The Flashes Collection*, 81-2.
44. Qur'an, 3:31.
45. *Lem'alar*, 53 / *The Flashes Collection*, 83-4.
46. This Hadith is sound in meaning. In his work, *Adab al-Imlā'*, Ibn al-Sam'ānī says it is narrated from Ibn Mas'ūd and "al-Manāwī expounded it [as a gloss] on *Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr*." Ibn Taymiyya says (xviii, 375) that it is sound in meaning but there is no evidence for the authenticity of its chain of narrators. This has been corroborated by al-Sakhāwī and al-Suyūṭī. See, *Kashf al-Khafā'*, i, 70.
47. *Lem'alar*, 55 / *The Flashes Collection*, 85-6.

each most beneficial remedies for sicknesses of the spirit, mind, and heart, and particularly for social sicknesses, and that matters put forward by philosophy cannot take their place, and to an extent I have made known to others in the Risale-i Nur what I have experienced."[48]

Bediuzzaman says that following to the letter every aspect of the practices is bestowed only on the highest of the elite, then continues:

> "If it is not possible to follow them in practice, everyone can seek to do so by intention, purpose, and by supporting them and being biased towards them. In any event one is compelled to follow the obligatory and compulsory sorts. Even if there is no sin involved in giving up the Practices which are 'recommended,' it results in considerable loss of merit. And if they are changed, it is a great error. When the Practices are followed in habitual actions and dealings, such acts become worship. While if they are not followed, it is not to be reproved, but the benefit from the light of the daily conduct of God's Beloved is less."[49]

God's Messenger (PBUH) being described by the verse *And you [stand] on an exalted standard of character*,[50] and by A'isha as "His character was the Qur'an,"[51] show that "Muhammad (Upon whom be blessings and peace) is the exemplar of the fine moral qualities that the Qur'an expounds. He conforms to them more than anyone, and his nature was created in accordance with them."[52]

Finally,

> "Since the Noble Messenger (Upon whom be blessings and peace) was created with a most moderate character and in the most perfect form, his actions and rest all proceeded on moderation and equanimity. His biography shows clearly that in all his actions he proceeded with moderation and equanimity, avoiding excess and negligence. Yes, the Noble Messenger (Upon whom be blessings and peace) conformed completely to the command *Therefore stand firm [in the Straight Way] as you are commanded,* (11:112) and therefore moderation is apparent in all his acts, words, and conduct."[53]

8. The Witnesses to Prophethood

In the third section of the Fifteenth Ray, *el-Hüccetü'z-Zehra* (The Shining Proof), Bediuzzaman offers a thirteen page discussion (pages 521-33) on the witnesses to Muhammad's (PBUH) prophethood. As with some other parts of his writings, this section has no particular name, but at its head is the sentence "The third part of a single lesson of the third 'School of Joseph.'" In the introduction, it says:

> "The Second Part was written at the implied command of Sura al-Fatiha in the five daily prayers, and through the effulgence of 'I testify that there is no god but God.' Now I have been obliged to write this Third Part, prompted by the tongue of 'I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of God,' and through the effulgence of the

48. *Lem'alar*, 56-7 / *The Flashes Collection*, 87.
49. *Lem'alar*, 57 / *The Flashes Collection*, 88.
50. Qur'an, 68:4.
51. *Muslim*, 746; *Aḥmad*, vi, 54, 91, 163; *Abū Dā'ūd*, 1342; *Nasā'ī*, iii, 199-200.
52. *Lem'alar*, 61 / *The Flashes Collection*, 92.
53. *Lem'alar*, 61 / *The Flashes Collection*, 92.

> sublime verses at the end of Sura al-Fath: *It is He Who sent His Prophet with guidance and the Religion of Truth, to proclaim it over all religion, and enough is God for a Witness. * Muhammad is the Messenger of God; and those who are with him are strong against unbelievers, [but] compassionate among each other*,[54] which display five miracles which look to the Unseen."[55]

For "the details, explanations, and documented proofs" Bediuzzaman refers listeners (or readers) to the treatise The Miracles of Muhammad (discussed above) and the Arabic *al-Hizb al-Nuri*.[56] Here we shall suffice with making a few points in very summary fashion.[57]

Bediuzzaman bases his discussion on two 'Signs' and fifteen 'Testimonies.' The First Sign is a discussion emphasizing how necessary for the world is Muhammad's (PBUH) prophethood. The Second Sign, which Bediuzzaman himself recited every day as part of his supplications is expressed [in Arabic] in the following concise lines:

> "Muhammad is the Messenger of God, ever faithful to his promise, through the testimony of his sudden appearance with a perfect religion, Islam, and Shari'a despite being unlettered, with the firmest belief, faith, and worship, the most elevated cause, supplications, and prayers, the most general message, utter steadfastness, and wondrous fruitfulness, all without equal."[58]

Following this, Bediuzzaman lists the testimony to and evidence for Muhammad's (PBUH) prophethood:

> "*The First* is a proof of prophethood proceeding from eleven of his attributes and states. Yes, his appearing —despite being unlettered— suddenly and without experience with a religion which has left in amazement the learned men and philosophers of fourteen centuries and has won first place among the revealed religions, is an attribute without equal. Also without like is the fact that Islam, which emerged from his words, actions, and conduct, has at all times educated and trained the spirits, souls, and minds of three hundred and fifty million people, taking them to spiritual advancement. Moreover, he appeared with such a Shari'a that for fourteen centuries it has ruled with its just laws one fifth of mankind leading it to material and spiritual progress. So too that Being (PBUH) appeared with such a faith and creed, and such strength of belief that all the people of reality have unanimously affirmed that, since they receive perpetual effulgence from it, his belief is at the highest and most powerful degree. The opposition of his innumerable opponents at that time not causing him the slightest anxiety, doubt, or scruple, shows too that the strength of his belief was without equal or like. And he displayed such worship of and servitude to God that bringing together the beginning and end of worship, imitating no one, he saw and conformed to the subtlest mysteries of worship, and fulfilled them even in the most tumultuous times. This was an incomparable attribute, as was his offering such prayers, supplications and entreaties to his Creator that up to the present his degree has not been reached, even with the

54. Qur'an, 48:28-9.
55. *Şualar*, 521.
56. *al-Ḥizb al-Nūrī:* a short collection of invocations and supplications. It should not be confused with *al-Mathnawī al-'Arabī al-Nūrī*.
57. *Şualar*, 521 ff.
58. *Şualar*, 522. (The original here is in Arabic, but in a style somewhat unfamiliar to Arabic.)

meeting of many minds, and no one has attained to his knowledge of God. And he called people to religion with such steadfastness and announced his prophethood with such boldness that although his people, his uncle, the great powers of the world, and the followers of the former religions were all opposed and hostile to him, he did not fear or hold back even a jot, but challenged them all and successfully accomplished his task. This too was an incomparable attribute.

"Thus, these eight wondrous, incomparable attributes form a most powerful testimony to his veracity and prophethood."[59]

The Second Testimony describes the testimony to Muhammad's (PBUH) messengership and veracity, of the truths and veracity of the six pillars of belief.[60]

In the Third Testimony he says that his thousands of miracles, perfections, and elevated fine morals testify most powerfully to his messengership and truthfulness.[61]

In the Fourth, he says that with its innumerable truths and proofs the Qur'an itself testifies to his messengership and veracity.[62]

The Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Testimonies concentrate on evidences to his prophethood like his attachment to God and his affirmation of Him and his turning to Him, the historical signs forewarning of his prophethood, the wonders before his mission, and some other events:

"For example, close to the time of the Prophet's (PBUH) birth stones being rained down from the claws of the *ababil* birds on the heads of Abraha's soldiers, who had come to destroy the Ka'ba; and on the night of his birth the idols in the Ka'ba all toppling over; and the palace of Chrosroes the Persian being destroyed; and the fire-worshipping Zoroastrians' fire being extinguished that night, which had been burning continuously for a thousand years; and on the certain reports of Bahira the Monk and Halima al-Sa'diya, clouds throwing shadows around his head; numerous events like these gave forewarning of his prophethood before its commencement. Also, there were very many events of differing kinds that he predicted would occur in the future, that is, after his death. For example, eighty miracles of his predictions about the Unseen like 'Uthman (May God be pleased with him) being martyred while reading the Qur'an, and Husayn (May God be pleased with him) being martyred at Karbala, have been described in detail on the basis of sound narrations and the books of history and the Prophet's biography."[63]

The Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Testimonies:

"... Spiritual poles and leaders like the great saints from Prophet's (PBUH) Family, who were the equivalent of the descendants of Abraham (Upon whom be peace), and 'Ali, Hasan, Husayn, the twelve Imams of the Prophet's Family, and the Gawth al-A'zam, Ahmad al-Rufa'i, Ahmad al-Badawi, Ibrahim al-Dassuqi, and Abu'l-Hasan al-Shazali... The Companions of the Prophet, considered to be the elevated and esteemed group after the prophets, and the *mujtahids*, imams, and

59. *Şualar*, 523.
60. *Şualar*, 524.
61. *Şualar*, 524.
62. *Şualar*, 525.
63. *Şualar*, 526.

learned scholars, who are known as the purified ones and veracious ones... Their belief at the degree of 'knowledge of certainty' in Muhammad's (PBUH) messengership and veracity forms a universal testimony... One of those innumerable witnesses is the Risale-i Nur, before which the deniers have found themselves helpless, and so deceiving the police and judiciary, have tried to silence it by means of the courts."[64]

The Thirteenth Testimony gives certain proofs of famous persons living in former times which confirm the prophets, and describes how

"chiefly the prophets, and the gnostics, soothsayers, and voices from the unseen, unanimously, repeatedly, and explicitly foretold the coming and messengership of Muhammad (PBUH), as signs known as '*irhāṣāt*.'"[65]

The Fourteenth Testimony is "the powerful testimony of the universe:"

"Just as the universe points to its Maker, Writer, and Inscriber, Who creates, administers, and organizes it, and decorating, determining, and planning it, has disposal over it as though it was a palace, a book, an exhibition, or place of display; so it requires and demands an elevated herald, a truthful discoverer, an exacting master, a faithful teacher, who will know the Divine purposes in its creation, and make them known, and will teach the instances of dominical wisdom in its changes, and announce the results of its dutiful motions, and proclaim its value and the perfections of the beings within it. Since this is so and it points to his existence, surely testifying in powerful and universal fashion to the veracity of Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him), who performed these duties better than anyone, and to his being the highest and most loyal official of its Creator, it declares: 'I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.'"[66]

The Fifteenth Testimony "comprises numerous sacred testimonies:"

"The Qur'an of Miraculous Exposition being given to Muhammad (PBUH) since, as demanded by 'the acts of Divine mercifulness,' within the regular disposals before our eyes in the universe, it is a custom of dominicality, with justice and wisdom, mercy, favour, and protection, to always protect the good and deal blows at the bad and liars; and nearly a thousand miracles of very many sorts being bestowed on him; and his being compassionately preserved in all circumstances and dangerous situations, even by a pigeon and a spider; and his being completely successful in all his duties; and his perpetuating his religion together with all its truths; and his conveying Islam to the earth and mankind; and his being given a position of honour above all creatures and a permanent rank of acceptance superior to all the pre-eminent of mankind and the highest character and qualities, as is agreed by friend and foe alike; and one fifth of mankind being made his community — all these testify in most decisive fashion to his faithfulness and messengership... His being made the highest leader and master of mankind, as is indicated by his having gained every day for fourteen centuries the equivalent of all the good works of his community and shown by his works in the life of society and man's spiritual life; and his being sent to the aid of mankind with burdensome, sacred duties, and men being made needy for his religion, his Shari'a, and the truths of

64. *Şualar*, 527.
65. *Şualar*, 528.
66. *Şualar*, 529-30.

Islam as they are for mercy, wisdom, justice, food, air, water, and light... all offer sacred testimony to the messengership of Muhammad (PBUH)."[67]

Conclusion

If we now turn back and take a look at the matters Bediuzzaman offered in connection with the Age of the Prophet, we see that they are centred on two basic sequences. The first of these and largest in respect of the areas it covers, comprises the following: (1) Miracles; (2) The Ascension; (3) Predictions about the Unseen; (4) Hadiths about the end of the world and the merits of certain actions. These are all subjects pertaining to the Unseen and are not dealt with together with the historical events of the Prophet's life; their roots stretch out behind the Manifest World.

The second sequence discusses in very summary and concise fashion various aspects of details about prophethood and the Prophet's life and practices. For example, (1) The necessity of adhering to the Prophet's practices and the consequences of this; (2) The highway of the Prophet's practices, which is to be followed in the question of love of the Prophet's Family; (3) A number of questions connected with the messengership of Muhammad (PBUH). If we are to mention these briefly: God's Messenger (PBUH) as a guide taking people to God; witnesses, basic aims and radical changes, his power to cause change, his total veracity, his great desire to save people, all of which prove his prophethood, and its greatest witness, the Qur'an.

In these two sequences and all their parts, Bediuzzaman does not consider it necessary to discuss facts about the Prophet (PBUH) chronologically. Just as he clearly displayed no effort to authenticate a Hadith when discussing it, so he attached no importance to the historical process. The point he laid greatest emphasis on was for the Prophet's life to again be studied in the light of a selective view which penetrates the depths of the spirit in all its length and breadth.

Thus, although Bediuzzaman discussed this subject at length and from various angles in the eight treatises he wrote mentioning the Age of the Prophet (PBUH), he did not write works of history or biography following the methods of the historians or those who have written books of 'siyar'. Furthermore, he did not discuss the Hadiths of the Prophet in the way of the Hadith scholars, one by one. He chose the way closest to the conjectural method, in such a way as to oppose neither the dictates of reason nor outward laws, and he adhered to this. Perhaps one may put it like this: he was reconciled with this way and he utilized it in the best manner corroborating the conclusions it reaches. Thus you see that deduction, analysis, and comparison are used extensively in the journeys Bediuzzaman made, which aimed at interweaving the Prophetic phenomena.

Yes, he utilized historical matter very proficiently and for the most part based its construction on Hadith. But he always passed beyond history and penetrated to what the Hadiths allude to and to their roots, which reach the World of the Unseen. In both circumstances he tried to disclose the spiritual depths of the

67. *Şualar*, 531-2.

events of the Prophet's life and the cosmic dimension of the Prophetic phenomena. He attached great importance to studies of the Prophet's life, and attempted to further elucidate the obscure points facing the historian. His statements about the Prophet's life demonstrate a true profundity which enable us to conceive abstractly its most distant levels. We may here recall just one of the Hadiths of God's Messenger (PBUH): "If you knew what I know, you would laugh little and weep much."[68]

In keeping with the method he follows in all his treatises, Bediuzzaman passes from the particular to the universal, from the temporal to the eternal, from transience to eternity, from the apparent to the hidden. His statements always send out roots behind beings and phenomena. However, he does not always employ this way, nor act in accordance with it. Surpassing the illusory bounds between dilemmas, in keeping with the Islamic conceptions particular to him, and in their shadow, he unites all differences and contradictions in the line of cosmic unity. In this way, man becomes an lord, the world a bridge stretching from the past to the future, the universe together with all its aspects an agglomeration of love and understanding, and the life of this world an opportunity of gaining reward on the Day of Judgement.

* * *

68. This Hadith is narrated by Imam Ahmad, Tirmidhi, and Ibn Maja.

The Companions of the Prophet (PBUH) in Bediuzzaman's Works

İbrahim Cânan

Introduction

It will be useful to state Bediuzzaman's view of the Companions in this connection. For at the present time certain inappropriate things have begun to be said about the Companions (May God be pleased with all of them), who were the first builders of Islamic civilization, and the first bearers of the Shari'a, to whom it was entrusted. However, without exception, they are repeatedly praised and commended in Qur'anic verses and Hadiths of the Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him). The Sunni *'ulama*, who base their judgements on these sources, have concurred on their justice. It is truly a great loss that influenced by 'breezes' from anti-Islamic quarters, some of the sons raised today by the Islamic world, which for fifteen centuries has held that lofty generation in the greatest honour and respect, are departing from that vast, unshakeable caravan of

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In addition to his former Faculty Journal, Prof. Cânan has published articles in magazines such as *Diyanet*, *Hakses*, *İslam*, *İslam Medeniyeti*, *Zafer*, *İcmal*, *Kadın ve Aile*, *Altınoluk*, and *Okul*. He won the Prize of the Turkish National Culture Foundation in 1979 with a work entitled, *Resulullah'a Göre Okul ve Ailede Çocuk Terbiyesi*. His published works include: *Tarihçi Açısından Din* (A translation of Toynbee's, Religion From the Point of View of the Historian) 1978; *Seminer ve Tez Rehber* (A Guide to Seminars and Theses), 1979; *Resulullah'a Göre Okul ve Ailede Çocuk Terbiyesi*, 1980; *Atatürk Üniversitesi Lojmanları ve* **(Cont. over →)**

fifteen centuries. The matter is not limited only to the loss of those individuals; it is a dissension that in the course of time will hinder the new generations' understanding of and identification with Islam. Have we given thought to what it means to cast aspersions on the Companions because of some personal and subjective observations, based on no actual or objective evidence, and where this will finally lead? We can say immediately: it will lead to doubt and scepticism about the authenticity of Hadith, and even about the integrity of the Qur'an, which form the basis of our religion, with its law, politics, social relations, punishments, worship, beliefs etc., with everything that pertains to it. Imam al-Haramayn said: "If through lack of confidence in the narrations of the Companions, they come to a standstill, the Shari'a of Islam will be limited to the era of the Prophet (PBUH). It will not encompass subsequent centuries." It is clear what a ghastly, infernal dissension it would be for Islam, the final religion for humanity, for all time. The dissension of the Antichrist, even, would not be so damaging.

The zealous cannot merely stand back and watch such a dissension. The question has to be solved before it spreads any further. And this will certainly not be with fists and clubs.

I believe that the seeds of this dissension find acceptance and sprout in the ground of ignorance. In which case, the Umma has to be informed of the matter, and the views of the Sunnis have to be set forth clearly so that everyone can understand them.

I want to recall the following at this point: in his works, Bediuzzaman discusses the question of the Companions in many contexts, corroborating exactly the views of the Sunnis, convincingly proving and explaining their rightness. It is therefore important, that to put a stop to the above-mentioned dissension, the new explanations put forward by Bediuzzaman are arranged systematically and presented to the people.

(Cont.) *Taklitçiliğimizin Muhasebesi* (The Ataturk University Residences and Calling to Account Our Imitating), 1979; *İslam'da Çocuk Hakları* (Children's Rights in Islam), 1980; *İslam'da Temel Eğitim Esasları* (The Principles of Basic Education in Islam), 1980; *Sulh Çizgisi* (The Line of Peace), 1980; *Tebliğ Terbiye ve Siyasî Taktik Açısından Hicret* (Migration from the point of view of Communication Training and Political Tactics), 1981; *Hz. Peygamberin Sünnetinde Terbiye* (Training in the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad), 1981; *Yeni Usul-i Hadis* (New Principles of Hadith by Zafer Ahmad al-Uthmanî, trans.), 1982; *Kur'an ve Hadise Göre Fitne ve Anarşi* (Dissension and Anarchy According to the Qur'an and Hadith), 1981; *Kur'an'da Çocuk* (Children in the Qur'an), 1984; *Peygamberimiz Hadisleriyle Medeniyet Kültür ve Teknik* (Civilization, Culture, and Technology According to the Hadiths of the Prophet), 1984; *Ahkamu's-Siğar* (Minor Judgements, by Ustrusheni, trans.), 1984; *Peygamberimizin Okuma-Yazma Seferberliği ve Öğretim Siyaseti* (The Prophet Muhammad's Literacy Campaign and Education Policy), 1985; *İslam'da Zaman Tanzimi* (The Ordering of Time in Islam), 1985, '88; *İslam'da Çevre Sağlığı* (The Healthy Environment in Islam); *Kütüb-i Sitte Muhtasarı Tercümesi ve Şerhi* 1-18 (Translation of and Commentary on the Abridged Six [Hadith] Books, 18 vols.), 1987-1994.

1. The Sunni views on the Companions

The Sunnis call 'Companions' those persons who saw the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), believed in his prophethood, and died believing.[1] It makes no difference if the meeting was brief or lengthy. Other conditions have also been laid down like "Being together with him for a long period," "Having fought alongside the Prophet (PBUH) in battles," and "Having narrated Hadiths." These however are uncommon, and have not become the rule.

According to the Sunnis, all the Companions were just.[2] That is, they would never knowingly tell lies about anything related to religion. Whatever they related about the Prophet, it was correct. Everything they said in connection with religion is to be trusted. The Sunni scholars have not considered it permissible to voice any doubts or suspicions that they might have lied. They hold this to be true for all the Companions. They consider all those who rose to being Companions to be equal in the question of justice; they do not differentiate between them.

The term 'just' has been given various meanings by the scholars.[3] It should be well understood what is intended when it is used in reference to the Companions. I want to state immediately that it does not mean that they were free of faults and sins (*ma'ṣūm*). According to the Sunnis, the state of *'iṣma*, that is, being preserved from sin, is a privilege reserved for the prophets. Apart from the prophets, no human being can claim such preservation from sin. The Shi'a's belief in the Sinless Imam is a false belief from this point of view, and not shared by the Sunnis. The Sunnis accept that due to their being human, the Companions may have been unintentionally at fault and in error.

In consequence, when saying "The Companions were just," the Islamic *'ulama* meant the following:

"They avoided intentionally lying when relating Hadiths or performing any action that would make such a narration unacceptable to others."[4]

There were differences among the Companions in respect of virtue and moral excellence. The most virtuous were the first Muslims, that is, those who spent most time with the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). For instance, the 'Ten Promised Paradise' were from among the first Muslims. Thus, those counted as Companions who saw God's Messenger only briefly at the very end of his life, were of lesser virtue than those who had seniority over them.

1. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (d. 852/1448), *al-Iṣāba fī Tamyīz al-Ṣaḥāba*, Egypt 1328, i, 7; al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abi Bakr (d. 911/1505), *Tadrīb al-Rāwī*, Cairo 1959, 396.
2. *al-Iṣāba*, i, 9-10; *Tadrīb al-Rāwī*, 400.
3. Various meanings are meant by 'justice:'
   i. The opposite of tyranny and injustice; giving their due to those whose right it is.
   ii. The opposite of sin and depravity; in the meaning of *taqwa*.
   iii. Chastity; being preserved from sin and immorality, which is particular to angels and prophets.
   iv. Being preserved from sin and error, which is a Divine favour and particular to saints.
   v. Being preserved from error in interpreting the Law; the expected Mahdi will be thus.
   vi. Being preserved from deliberately falsifying narrations about the Prophet.
   See, 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Abd al-Laṭīf (ed.), *Tadrīb al-Rāwī*, 401-2.
4. See, 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Abd al-Laṭīf, *Tadrīb al-Rāwī*, 402.

The Sunnis rely on verses of the Qur'an and Hadiths when pronouncing the Companions just, without differentiating between them, for there are numerous verses and Hadiths which do this. One of the verses is:

> *You are indeed the best community that has ever been brought forth for [the good of] mankind.*[5, 6]

We may also quote the Hadith: "Whoever vilifies any one of my Companions, may God's curses be upon him!", which is one of many similar.[7]

Another view of the Sunnis that should be taken note of is that no one can reach the Companions in the question of virtue and moral excellence. That is to say, any of the Companions was superior in virtue to anyone that came after him, even if he was the very least of the Companions. To put it another way, even the most select and eminent of the Umma in respect of knowledge, learning, and sainthood cannot reach the level of virtue and moral excellence of the least of the Companions. As evidence for this, the Islamic scholars quote the Hadith: "By He in the hand of whose power is my self! If any one of you were to spend a mountain of gold to maintain others, it would not be as meritorious as my Companions spending a handful, or even half a handful."[8]

Their conversations with God's Messenger (Peace and blessings be upon him) were the source of such effulgence for them and elevated them to a degree so high it is not possible to reach it by any other means. It is therefore not permissible for any member of the Umma to compete with them as regards virtue or to claim superiority. To do so would be contrary to the courtesy demanded by membership of the Umma of Muhammad (PBUH). For the verse states that no believer, man or woman, can gainsay God and His Messenger, once they have spoken.[9]

2. Bediuzzaman's views on the Companions' superiority

Bediuzzaman shares the views of the Sunnis concerning the Companions. He says the Companions are the most excellent generation of humanity. Conversation with God's Messenger (PBUH) afforded them such effulgence and honour that "the greatest of the saints" of the Umma who succeeded them "even, who are the most perfect of true human beings, cannot claim to be equal to the least of the Companions."[10]

The Addendum to the Twenty-Seventh Word is an independent discussion about the Companions. It is as though written to provide a convincing exposition of the Sunnis' views on the question of the Companions which will be acceptable to everyone. The piece includes in question and answer form the most impor-

5. Qur'an, 3:110.
6. al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1070-1), *al-Kifāya fī 'Ilm al-Riwāya*, 93-7. Some of the verses and Hadiths related to this are included in my work, *Kütüb-ü Sitte Muhtasarı Şerhi*, Ankara, Akçağ 1987, i, 522-5.
7. al-Haythamī, *Majmū'a'l-Zawā'id*, x, 21.
8. *al-Bukhārī*, Faḍā'il al-Aṣḥāb, 5; *Muslim*, Faḍā'il al-Ṣaḥāba, 221, 222.
9. Qur'an, 33:36.
10. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Sözler*, Istanbul, Envar Neşriyat 1985, 496 / *The Words* [Eng. trans.], Istanbul, Sözler Publications 1993, 512.

tant matters which are made the subject of polemic on the subject. All its explanations are contained in the answers to six questions. Five of these are directly related to the Companions, and one indirectly related. The directly related questions are based on Hadiths about the Companions and just about summarize the polemic about it, so I want to begin here by quoting them:

1) "*You Ask:* There are some narrations which say: 'At a time when innovations are rife, some of the righteous from among the believers and those who fear God will be on a level with the Companions, or of even greater virtue.' Are these narrations sound? And if so, what is their true meaning?"[11]

2) "*Question*: It is said, the Companions saw God's Messenger (Peace and blessings be upon him), then they believed. However we have believed without seeing him, in which case our belief is stronger. Also, are there not narrations pointing to the strength of our belief?"

3) "One time, it occurred to me, why could wondrous individuals like Muhyiddin al-'Arabi not attain to the level of the Companions?"

4) "They say that the saints and possessors of perfection abandoned the world. It even says in a Hadith: 'Love of this world is the source of all error.' Whereas the Companions were very involved in the world. It was not abandoning the world, some of the Companions were ahead of the civilized of that time even. How is it that you say that even the least of such Companions was of higher worth than the greatest saint?"

5) "Where does the claim of the Companions' superiority spring from? And who put it forward? Why should this matter be made the subject of discussion at this time? Also, why is there this claim of equality with the great interpreters of the law (*mujtahid*)?"[12]

3. The reasons for the Companions' superiority

The first question is related to the question of whether or not there has been any member of Muhammad's (PBUH) community more virtuous than the Companions. For a large number of narrations whose authenticity is pretty doubtful state that some persons who will appear at the end of time will be superior to the Companions in respect of virtue.

As noted above, Bediuzzaman puts the shared meaning of those narrations in Turkish, into question form: "*At a time when innovations are rife, some of the righteous from among the believers and those who fear God will be on a level with the Companions, or of even greater virtue. Are these narrations sound? And if so, what is their true meaning?*"[13]

11. *Sözler*, 488-9 / *The Words*, 504.
12. *Sözler*, 494 / *The Words*, 510-11.
13. According to Abdülkadir Badıllı, who researched into the Arabic original of the Turkish given here, there are narrations expressing this meaning which come from thirty-three different sources. According to one aspect of the Hadith, which is narrated in Ahmad b. Hanbal and Darimi as having come from two lines of authorities, one of which is sound, the Companions asked God's Messenger (PBUH): "Messenger of God! We became Muslim and strove in God's way (*jihad*) together with you. Will there be anyone better than us?" He replied: "Yes, a group that will come after you and will believe although they have not seen me." See, Tabrīzī, Walīyyud-Dīn, b. 'Abd Allāh, *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*, Damascus 1961, No: 6282. Twelve narrations related to the superiority of a group of the Umma that was to come later are recorded together in *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*, iii, 292-5.

Before moving on to Bediuzzaman's answer, I want to draw attention to a masterly touch in the question: the condition "when innovations are rife" is not to be found in any of the narrations which compare the virtue of a subsequent generation with that of the Companions. He is thus saying right in the question stage that the first condition of acquiring virtue comparable to that of the Companions —enduring severe tribulations "as though holding fire in one's hand"[14] at a time people have grown away from the Prophet's practices (Sunna) due to the prevalence of innovations— is to follow the practices. As it is said in another Hadith: "Those who adhere to my practices at a time the Umma is corrupted will receive the recompense of a hundred martyrs."[15]

We may study Bediuzzaman's answer to the question he posed in this fashion in two parts:

First Part: This part is an introductory paragraph of eight lines in which, with much skill in regard to both style and manner of expression, he summarizes the matter from a number of angles: (1) He draws attention to the existence of both sound Hadiths on this subject and those which are not sound. (2) He explains the meaning of "the superiority of subsequent generations of the Umma." (3) Offering evidence from the Qur'an, he expresses his conviction that the Companions are the most superior generation in human history.

Second Part: Here, a reasoned explanation is given for the Companions' superiority. After alluding to a number of the reasons for their superiority, only three are discussed. Before describing these three reasons, we quote the introductory paragraph whose three main themes are mentioned above. This is also like the 'thesis' of the matter:

> "The consensus of the Sunnis, the *Ahl-i Sunna va Jama'at*, that after the prophets the most virtuous of mankind are the Companions, is a certain proof that those that are sound out of those narrations refer to minor virtues. For in minor virtues and particular perfections a quality may be deemed preferable over that which is superior and in fact preferable. But from the point of view of general virtue[16] the Companions cannot be reached, who are the subject of Divine praise at the end of *Sura al-Fath*, and are praised and applauded in the Torah, Gospels, and Qur'an. For now, we shall explain three points of wisdom concerning this truth, which comprise three reasons, out of very many reasons and instances of wisdom."[17]

I shall now summarize those three reasons:

FIRST REASON: This is the conversation of God's Messenger (Peace and blessings be upon him). This "was such an elixir that someone who experienced it for one minute received lights of reality equivalent to years of the spiritual

14. *Tirmidhī*, Fitan, 73 No: 2261; Munāwī, 'Abd al-Rā'uf, *Fayḍ al-Qadīr*, Beirut 1972, vi, 261 No: 9162.
15. *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*, i, 62; *Fayḍ al-Qadīr*, No: 96171.
16. From the term "general virtue" we may understand all the virtues. Whereas "particular virtue" is virtue of one sort. The total virtue of a Companion in worship, knowledge, jihad, and the establishment of Islam constituted his general virtue. No one can be equal to the Companions in this virtue, but someone who lived subsequently might surpass them in either jihad or knowledge or in some other virtue.
17. *Sözler*, 489 /*The Words*, 504-5.

journeying" of the sufis. "Due to the mystery that, through allegiance to his sovereign and following him, a sultan's servant rises to a position so high a king cannot rise to it, the greatest saints cannot reach the level of the Companions." The Companions' conversation was conversation with Muhammad (PBUH) as Prophet. Its loftiness and refinement may be understood from this example: "A primitive man so hard-hearted and savage he buried his daughter alive would come and be honoured with the conversation of the Prophet for an hour, and would acquire such kindness and compassion he would not step on an ant. While an ignorant savage would converse with the Prophet for a day, then go to lands like China and India and instruct civilized peoples in the realities and guide them in perfections." In *Leme'at,* he expressed this in verse as follows:

"One look of the Messenger transformed of a sudden
An ignorant tribesman into an enlightened man of knowledge.
If you want an example:
'Umar before Islam
And 'Umar after Islam."[18]

SECOND REASON: The vast majority of the Companions were at the very peak of human perfections.

"For at that time in the mighty revolution of Islam, good and truth appeared in all their beauty, and evil and falsehood, in all their ugliness, and they were felt physically. Such a difference was apparent between good and evil and such a distance opened up between truth and falsehood that they drew as apart and distant from one another as belief is from unbelief, and even Hell is from Paradise."

Nothing else could have been expected in such a situation from the Companions with their elevated characters, other than supporting with all their strength veracity, truth, and belief, which had produced a luminous fruit like God's Messenger (PBUH) and a result like Paradise. Bediuzzaman states on other occasions too that the Companions' justice was largely the result of this.[19]

THIRD REASON: The relation of prophethood to sainthood is that of the sun itself to its reflection in mirrors. Certainly the sun in the sky and its image in a mirror are so different and distant from each other that there can be no comparison between them.

"And so, however much higher the sphere of prophethood is than that of sainthood, the servants of the sphere of prophethood and the Companions, the stars of that Sun, have to that degree to be superior to the righteous in the sphere of sainthood."

There are three different aspects of superiority in this third reason:

First Aspect: Superiority in ijtihad

"The Companions cannot be reached in interpretation of the law, that is, in deducing its ordinances, that is, in understanding what pleases Almighty God from His Word. Because that mighty Divine revolution revolved on understanding the dominical wishes and Divine ordinances."

18. *Sözler*, 711.
19. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Muhâkemat*, Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1977, 132; *Barla Lahikası*, Sözler Yayınevi 1990, 155; *Hutbe-i Şâmiye*, Istanbul, Envar Neşriyat 1990, 48-9.

Minds, thought, intellects, desires, ambitions were all turned towards this. Everyone's ability to learn developed in that direction. But at the present time the great majority of people seek this world, they are preoccupied with philosophy and politics, their desires and ambitions are all different, their ideas are confused. The social environment and cultural atmosphere has an overpowering effect on the development of the personality and abilities. So much so that the people of the present are in need of at least ten times longer than the Companions to acquire the capacity to carry out *ijtihad.*

Because of the importance of this question, Bediuzzaman asks a question that might occur to anyone, and provides the answer:

"*If you say:* The Companions also were human beings and not free of error and differences, while the means of interpretation of the law and the ordinances of the Shari'a is the justice and truthfulness of the Companions, on which the Islamic community have agreed, saying: 'All the Companions were just and all spoke the truth.'"

In reply, Bediuzzaman says: "Yes, the absolute majority of the Companions of the Prophet were lovers of the truth, truthfulness, and justice..." And then gives an explanation within the framework of the points made in the First and Second Reasons above.[20]

The point I want to note in particular here is Ustad's cautious approach: "Yes, the absolute majority of the Companions of the Prophet were lovers of the truth..." It is understood from this that even if very few in number, some of them might not be included under this description. With his caution here, Bediuzzaman may have intended those who committed certain acts, which if observed in anyone other than the Companions would have been a means of refuting them, since it would have negated their justice. However, the *ulama* ruled that since they had repented, they had been purified, and in accordance with verses 4-5 of Sura al-Nur, due to their repenting and being cleansed, had regained their justice. Nevertheless, for some reason no narration has been included in our books about Ma'idh ibn Malik, Ghamidiyya (a woman), and 'Abdullah, known as Khimar, who received the *hadd* penalty in the Prophet's time.[21]

Second Aspect: Their closeness to God differed from that of the saints

The level of the Companions with regard to closeness to God cannot be reached with the feet of sainthood. For their sainthood was not that of the saints which can be gained by traversing the levels in spiritual journeying. Known as 'the greater sainthood,' it was the disclosing of Divine immediacy. It is not attained, it is God-given. "The unfolding of Divine immediacy" occurs through deepening knowledge of Almighty God's essence, attributes, and acts. It occurred at once in the spirits of the Companions through the reflection and drawing power of the light of prophethood, as a Divine favour.[22]

20. *Sözler*, 484 / *The Words*, 499.
21. See, Bakan, Tevhid, *Ashab'ın Adaleti* (unpub. thesis), Erzurum 1993, 57.
22. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Mektûbat*, Sözler Yayınevi 1991 / *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Letters—1928-1932* [Eng. trans.], Sözler Publications 1994, 71-2.

The prophets are close to God in this way, and the Companions manifested the mystery through 'the legacy of prophethood' and company of the Prophet.

• The differences between the Companions and the saints

1) The Companions' souls were purified by God

When describing the elevated rank of the Companions, which not even "wondrous individuals like Muhyiddin al-'Arabi" could rise to,[23] Bediuzzaman insistently mentions their mental and spiritual states. As shall be seen, this is not to be encountered explicitly in the works about the Companions of former writers; it is particular to Bediuzzaman. He says that through the effulgence they received from the company of prophethood, they were cleansed and purified spiritually as a Divine favour. For others to be able to receive this spiritual purification, they have to traverse the intermediate realm of spiritual journeying and through great striving kill their instinctual souls. Bediuzzaman does not consider it appropriate to kill the soul in order to purify the spirit and attain true perfection. The soundest way according to him is to cleanse and purify it without killing the soul. For with its death, numerous subtle inner faculties connected to it die, as a result of which worship, which the soul would also perform, becomes simple [or one-dimensional]. For this reason, the souls of the Companions, which had been purified through Divine grace without being killed, performed a rich [multi-dimensional] worship, together with all the faculties and senses tied to them, each with its different worship, yet in chorus. Bediuzzaman describes this as follows:

> "For sure, the saints are successful in annihilating the soul and kill the evil-commanding soul, but they still cannot reach the Companions. Because, since the Companions' souls had been purified and cleansed, they manifested to a greater degree through the many faculties within the soul, the varieties of worship, thanks, and praise. After the soul has been annihilated, the worship of the saints acquires a simpleness and plainness."[24]

I want to mention here what Bediuzzaman means by "the many faculties within the soul," which are said to be annihilated together with the soul. In addition to explaining in various contexts that man has not only a heart, but a mind, spirit, inner heart, and soul,[25] Bediuzzaman says that only the soul has "thousands of emotions," such as anxiety for the future, love, obstinacy, and ambition, and that by directing them towards good, man may attain true perfection.[26]

Thus, the Companions were people all of whose "subtle inner faculties... received their share from the Qur'an itself."[27] Bediuzzaman repeatedly expressed this certain conviction of his. He said:

> "If man consisted of only a heart, he would have to give up everything other than God, and leave behind even the Divine Names and attributes and bind the heart to the Divine Essence alone. But he possesses many senses and subtle faculties, all charged with duties, like the mind, spirit, soul, and others. The perfect man is he who, driving all those subtle senses towards reality on the different ways of worship particular to them, marches heroically like the Companions in a broad arena and rich fashion towards the goal with his heart as commander and his subtle faculties as soldiers. For his heart to abandon its soldiers in order to save itself alone and to proceed on its own would be not the cause of pride, but of distress."[28]

23. *Sözler*, 490 / *The Words*, 506.
24. *Sözler*, 492 / *The Words*, 509.
25. *Sözler*, 495 / *The Words*, 511.
26. *Mektûbat*, 30 / *Letters*, 51-2.
27. *Mektûbat*, 331 / *Letters*, 419-20.

It was because the Companions attained to this multi-dimensional spirituality that "a single hour" of theirs was the equivalent of "a day of the saints."[29] And God's Messenger (Peace and blessings be upon him) "challenged forty rulers with forty Companions."[30]

We can find more specific examples of this related to the Companions in Bediuzzaman's writings. As is described in greater detail below, he says that they attached more importance to the world than 'the people of civilization' of their time, but this was not for the sake of their souls, but for God's pleasure.[31]

2) The different sainthood of the Companions

Another point we should make clear in setting forth Bediuzzaman's views on the Companions concerns the nature of the sainthood observed in the Companions. Bediuzzaman called this "the greater sainthood," and described it as follows:

> "The Companions' sainthood, known as the 'greater sainthood,' was a sainthood which arose from the legacy of prophethood, and, passing directly from the apparent to reality without travelling the intermediate path, looks to the unfolding of Divine immediacy."[32]

The most distinctive attribute of this sainthood is its following the Sunna:

> "The finest, straightest, richest, and most brilliant is following the practices of the Prophet. That is, to think of the practices in acts and deeds, and to follow and imitate them, and in conduct and dealings with others, to think of the rulings of the Shari'a and take them as guide."[33]

Sainthood (*velayet*) is basically a way of attaining closeness to God, and gaining His pleasure and friendship.

What does it mean to attain closeness to God, for He is closer to us than anything else? He is closer to us than our jugular vein.[34] But what about us? Are we close to God?

We are far from God. In which case, man's closeness to God is to gain His pleasure and love.

Bediuzzaman says that this closeness may be obtained in two ways: *The first*

28. *Sözler*, 495 / *The Words*, 511.
29. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Şualar*, Istanbul, Çeltut Matbaası 1959, 13. (What is meant here is most probably 'an instant,' not sixty minutes.)
30. *Barla Lahikası*, 144.
31. *Sözler*, 494-5 / *The Words*, 511.
32. *Mektûbat*, 47 / *Letters*, 71.
33. *Mektûbat*, 421 / *Letters*, 526.
34. Qur'an, 50:16.

way is through the unfolding of Divine immediacy; that is, not through a person's will, but by increasing God Almighty's love for the person and contentment with him, Who is anyway closer to him than anything else, God's closeness being unfolded to the person; this was the sort of closeness of the Prophet. *The second* is the person advancing through his own striving and efforts; that is, by his traversing the degrees.

Bediuzzaman states that through the legacy of prophethood and conversation with the Prophet (PBUH), the Companions manifested the first sort of sainthood. Since this sainthood, which he calls 'the greater sainthood,' is not obtained through the person's efforts (*kesbî*) but is Divinely bestowed (*vehbi*), that is, attained to through the unfolding of Divine closeness, he says it is not possible to reach the Companions through the normal ways of sainthood, which are based on attaining to Divine closeness through personal efforts:

> "The level of the Companions with regard to closeness to God cannot be attained with the feet of sainthood. For Almighty God is infinitely close to us; closer to us than everything, but we are infinitely distant from Him."[35]

Bediuzzaman makes the following comparison in order to show the difference between the two forms of sainthood:

> "... There are two ways of reaching yesterday. The first is not to be subject to the course of time. Through a sacred power, it is to rise above time and see yesterday as present like today. The second is to traverse the distance of a year, to travel and turn, and come to yesterday. But still yesterday cannot be held on to; it leaves the person and departs. In just the same way, there are two ways of passing from the apparent to reality. The first is to be carried away directly on the attraction of reality, and without entering the intermediate realm of the sufi way, to find reality within the apparent itself. The second is to pass through many levels by means of spiritual journeying."

In the continuation of his analysis, Bediuzzaman says that the first way, which is a short way to reality, is that of the Companions, while the second, long, way is that of the other saints, and that it is not possible to reach the Companions on this second way.[36]

I should mention immediately at this point that those unable to grasp this privileged state of the Companions form a number of erroneous opinions. Bediuzzaman interprets these opinions in the form of a question:

> "The Unity of Existence is considered by many people to be the most elevated station. But the way of the Unity of Existence in this form was not seen explicitly in the Companions and foremost the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs, who were at the level of 'the greatest sainthood,' or in the Imams of the Prophet's Family and foremost the five 'People of the Cloak,' or the great interpreters of the law and the generation following the Companions and primarily the founders of the four schools of law. So did those who emerge subsequently advance further than them? Did they find a better highway on which to proceed?"

35. *Sözler*, 492 / *The Words*, 508.
36. *Sözler*, 492 / *The Words*, 508-9.

Bediuzzaman begins his refuting answer like this:

> "God forbid! Nobody at all has the ability to advance further than those purified ones, who were the stars and heirs closest to the Sun of Prophethood; the highway is indeed theirs."[37]

3) The Companions did not practise asceticism

What is generally meant by 'asceticism' (*zühd*) is not seeking the life of this world, but focussing one's life on the hereafter and worship. It is reasonable to ask what the Companions' position was in this question. With certain exceptions like 'Uthman ibn Maz'un, Abu Dharr al-Ghiffari, and 'Abdullah b. 'Amr, asceticism of the sort defined above was not observed in the lives of the Companions. Bediuzzaman expressed this characteristic of the overwhelming majority of the Companions in a question asked of him:

> "They say that the saints and possessors of perfection abandoned the world. It even says in a Hadith: 'Love of this world is the source of all error.'[38] Whereas the Companions were very involved in the world. It was not abandoning the world, some of the Companions were ahead of the civilized of that time even. How is it that you say that even the least of such Companions was of higher worth than the greatest saint?"[39]

In answering this question Bediuzzaman refers to the explanations in other parts of the Risale-i Nur of the ways of viewing the world. He says that the world has three faces: one of these looks to man's evil-commanding soul, and it is on this face that all man's evils, rebellions, sins, and wrongdoing are committed; its second face is the seed-bed of the hereafter; while as a place of manifestation of the Divine Names, its third face acts as a missive or mirror making God known to man. Bediuzzaman states that the world condemned in Hadiths is in respect of its first face, and that it should be loved in respect of its other two faces. The Companion's love of the world was not for its first face, but for its other two faces.[40]

While on the subject I want to discuss further Bediuzzaman's views on asceticism. Since he took the way of the Companions as his criterion in every matter, he offered a different interpretation of asceticism, that is, giving up the world: a person may love "delicious foods and fruits, his father, mother, children, and spouse, his friends and companions, the prophets and saints, life, youth, the spring, beautiful things and the world." But in loving all these, he should do so on Almighty God's account.[41] According to Bediuzzaman, this sort of love of the world is similar to that of the Companions. Former scholars who did not grasp this subtlety of the prohibitions in the Hadiths had recourse to artificial explanations in order to avoid the contradiction of encouraging people to give up

37. *Mektûbat*, 76 / *Letters*, 107. Ustad here explains the true nature of the Unity of Existence in two and a half pages; those interested should read it.
38. Anyone wishing for information about this '*mursal*' Hadith, which is narrated from Hasan al-Basri, should refer to Munawi's *Fayd al-Qadir*, iii, 368-9.
39. *Sözler*, 494 / *The Words*, 510-11. For views of the world, see, 625-6 / 653-4; 638-51 / 668-81.
40. *Sözler*, 495 / *The Words*, 510-11.
41. *Sözler*, 638 / *The Words*, 668.

the world without offering anything to back up their advice. We may give the following interpretation of Ghazzali as an example:

> "Mustafa, Peace and blessings be upon him, said: 'Love of this world is the source of all error.' If people did not love the world, it would go to wrack and ruin and life could not continue, but he still taught that love of the world took one to perdition. The reason was that the majority would not root out love of the world from their hearts on its being said that it took them to perdition; only a small minority would do so, and with their giving up the world, it would not go to wrack and ruin. Therefore, the Messenger (PBUH) did not refrain from advising and recalling the harms resulting from love of the world. Similarly, because of his confidence that men would still fulfil their functions related to lust, which in accordance with the verse: *If We had so willed, We could certainly have brought every soul its true guidance; but the Word from Me will come true, 'I will fill Hell with jinns and men all together,'*[42] as a cause of perdition had been made a means of testing, so as to send men to Hell; and because he feared they might give it up altogether, he still did not give up warning about its dangers."[43]

Bediuzzaman tried to define his attitude to the world in clearer terms[44] with sayings like "The world should be given up not from the point of view of striving, but with the heart."[45] "All believers are charged with upholding the Word of God, and at this time the most important means of this is material progress."[46]

We may reach the following conclusion from his discussions: Muslims this age must lay claim to the world in order to know God, save the dignity of religion by upholding the Word of God, and win the hereafter. But this should be purely to gain God's pleasure. The measure of this is while gaining the world, to permit nothing prohibited by religion, not to neglect worship, to give *zakat* on the profits, and to spend willingly and enthusiastically on God's way out of those gains.

Third Aspect: The Companions' 'good-deed books' are still open

According to Bediuzzaman, another reason why those who have come after the Companions have been unable to reach their level, was the great merit of the Companions' actions. This arises from two points:

1 - They strove in the most difficult conditions to establish Islam and spread its injunctions throughout the earth. Deeds differ in value according to the importance of the situation and severity of conditions. Guard duty on the frontier in normal conditions in times of peace is not the same as guard duty performed in wartime under threat of death in the freezing cold. Similarly, the service the Companions performed in establishing Islam, challenging the whole world, was of such high worth and was so meritorious in God's eyes that subsequent generations have not been able to reach their level of service.

42. Qur'an, 32:13.
43. *Fayḍ al-Qadīr*, iii, 368.
44. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, Istanbul 1958, 114.
45. Bediuzzaman's views on asceticism (*zuhd*) are dealt with in detail in my work *İslam Âleminin Ana Meselelerine Bediüzzaman'dan Çözümler*, Istanbul, Yeni Asya Yayınları 1993, 135-7.
46. It is enough to read the section "Explanation of the world's reality in relation to man" in his *Ihya*, to see the difficulties Ghazzali experienced in trying to explain this. See, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, Egypt, Maktabat al-Tijāriyya, n.d., ii, 230; iii, 219.

Moreover, it says in the Hadith that if those of subsequent generations were to give gold to the amount even of Mount Uhud, it would not have the value of half a handful of what the Companions gave. And it says in the Qur'an that the deeds of believers after the conquest of Mecca were not as meritorious as the deeds of believers before that. The merit of those before the conquest was greater.[47]

2 - Furthermore, by establishing Islam, the Companions were the cause of those who came after them finding right-guidance. So in consequence of the rule taken from a Hadith 'the cause is like the doer,' since the Companions have a share in the merits of those who succeeded them, it is impossible for anyone else to reach their degree of merit. Bediuzzaman cites as evidence of their "partaking in the good deeds of all the Umma," their being mentioned in the blessing "O God, grant blessings to our master Muhammad and to his Family and Companions," which is recited by all the Umma in all the obligatory five daily prayers. And he says:

> "Furthermore, just as an insignificant characteristic in the root of a tree takes on a larger form in the tree's branches, and is larger than the largest branch; and just as a small protuberance at the beginning gradually forms a mass; and just as an excess the size of a needle point at a central point may become more than a metre at the circumference of the circle, just like these four examples, since the Companions were part of the roots and foundations of the luminous tree of Islam, and were at the beginning of luminous lines of the structure of Islam, and were from among the leaders of the Islamic community and were the first of their number, and since they were close to the centre of the Sun of Prophethood and Lamp of Reality, a few of their actions were many and their small acts of service were great. To reach their level necessitates being a true Companion."[48]

4) The Companions' degree of worship cannot be reached

Bediuzzaman offers an explanation about the Companions' worship which is not to be encountered in the works of any other scholar. This explanation is the natural consequence of some of the ideas and explanations about the Companions which we have noted above. It is difficult to understand this, and therefore accept it, without properly understanding the above. But once they are thoroughly understood, a number of problems are solved which are to be found in the books about the Companions and are difficult to understand.

I want to embark on this discussion by mentioning a problem I personally had difficulty in understanding and explaining, for I solved the problem I am going to set out here with the help of Bediuzzaman's analysis of the Companions' worship. The problem was this: I saw that in a number of narrations in the authoritative sources, some of the Companions had lost their sensibilities while performing their worship as though their senses had been deadened, and I had difficulty in explaining this.

For example, while performing the prayers on night guard duty during the expedition of Dhat al-Riqa', 'Abbad b. Bishr (May God be pleased with him)

47. Qur'an, 57:10.
48. *Sözler*, 493 / *The Words*, 509.

was struck by the arrow of an idolator, who was marking him. But he pulled out the arrow with his hand and continued the prayers. Seeing that he had risen to perform the second *rak'at*, the idolator thought that the first arrow had missed, and shot another. 'Abbad pulled out the second arrow and continued to pray. He was struck by a third arrow, which he also pulled out, and completed the prayers. He was standing in a pool of blood. He informed 'Ammar b. Yasir, who was also on guard duty and had been sleeping. When asked by 'Ammar why he had not told him when hit by the first arrow, he replied: "The sura I was reading was such I did not want to break off!"[49]

Similarly, 'Ali, unable to bear the pain of having an arrow that had stuck in his foot being pulled out, told those with him that he would perform the prayers and that they should pull it out while he was doing so. Another story about the Companions connected with the prayers is about Abu Ayyub al-Ansari: he was very sensitive to noise, but while performing the prayers was entirely insensible to it.

An incident similar to the above has been narrated about Jundab b. Makis: he pulled out two arrows without wincing which had struck him one after the other while he was carrying out his duty of look-out at night. He performed his duty perfectly without leaving his post.[50] This incident did not occur while he was performing his worship, but while performing his duty, of greater value than personal worship, and particularly the duty of jihad, considered to be the highest form of worship.

While on the subject of feats related to duty, it is worth mentioning the unbelievable story about 'Ali during the conquest of Khaybar: while capturing the citadel, 'Ali's shield was struck from his grasp by a blow of the enemy. He seized hold of the door of the citadel and used it as a shield throughout the battle. When the battle came to its victorious conclusion, he laid it down on the ground, and eight men could not lift it.[51] For sure, some people who cannot accept anything unless it is corroborated by the West, say such historical incidents are "merely tales," instead of trying to find a reasonable explanation. But this is really the easy way out. For a similar incident occurred in our own times during the Battle of Gallipoli: a Turkish soldier who had lost all his companions in the course of the battle, on his own lifted a shell which normally could be lifted only by several people, and placing it in the heavy gun and firing it accurately, sank the leading ship of the enemy fleet which was about to enter the Straits, thus turning the tide of the battle in our favour.

How can all these incidents be explained? Or should they be rejected saying like some people who choose the easy way out "they are fables and fictitious

49. *Abū Dā'ūd*, Ṭahāra, 79. For an explanation, see my work, *Kütüb-ü Sitte Muhtasarı Tercüme and Şerhi*, Ankara 1990, x, 456-9.

50. al-Ṭabarī, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jawr (d. 310/922), *Ta'rīkh al-Ṭabarī*, Beirut 1962, iii, 27-8.

51. Wāqidī, Muḥammad b. 'Umar (d. 207/822-3), *al-Maghāzī*, Oxford 1966, ii, 655; *Ta'rīkh al-Ṭabarī*, iii, 1; Ibn Hishām, Muḥammad, *al-Sīrat al-Nabawiyya*, Egypt 1955, iii-iv, 355. Bediuzzaman describes this incident as a miracle which was the manifestation of the prediction of God's Messenger (PBUH) that "Khaybar will be conquered at 'Ali's hand," and he says: "According to one narration, forty men could not lift" the gate from where it had been dropped (*Mektûbat*, 99 / *Letters*, 138). Attention is drawn to the weakness of the Hadith.

nonsense;" or in a fairer manner: "these are not unanimous narrations; they are not sound and cannot be established certainly." It is not easy to deny a truth that has been confirmed by so many incidents. In which case, it has to be explained.

As I stated a little previously, some of Bediuzzaman's discussions help us to reach a reasonable explanation of these. This explanation is made up of several different ideas, which Bediuzzaman states in various places and which complement each other. As follows:

1) According to Bediuzzaman, before everything man is not a being composed of only five senses. He has "thousands of senses and emotions,"[52] most of which have no name. Some of them are love, obstinacy, anxiety for the future, greed, reliance, hope, joy, confidence, which have been named since they are powerful, and which everyone knows.[53]

I should state immediately that Bediuzzaman sometimes calls these non-physical senses, feelings, or emotions (*his*), *duygu*, and sometimes *latife* or its plural form, *leta'if*.

2) All of these senses and emotions were in fact created for elevated purposes and put at man's disposal. That is to say, all the emotions have their own particular worship and degree of affirming Divine unity. While worshipping, through his will and effort, man may direct all of them towards the ideal goal. This is possible.[54] As we noted above, Bediuzzaman said in this connection: "The perfect man is he who, driving all those subtle senses towards reality on the different ways of worship particular to them..." He also says that: "Yes, true progress is to turn the faces of the heart, spirit, intellect, and even the imagination and other subtle faculties given to man towards eternal life and for each to be occupied with the particular duty of worship worthy of it."[55]

3) Through the blessings and effulgence of the Prophet's (PBUH) company, the noble Companions manifested this mystery. Directing all their subtle faculties while worshipping towards their particular forms of worship, they attained to a true affirmation of Divine unity that we might call '*taabbüdî tevhid*.' Each of their subtle senses received its share from the meanings —in all their breadth and comprensiveness— of the supplications and formulas recited during worship. For example, when we say "In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate" during the five daily prayers, our intellects may receive a share of its meaning, so long as we know Arabic and our minds are not busy with something else. But the overwhelming majority of our other faculties and senses, which are said to number thousands, will have no share. However, Bediuzzaman described in connection with the *Bismillah* "one manifestation" of the spiritual life of the affirmation of Divine unity and reflective thought that he experienced in nine pages in the Second Station of the Fourteenth Flash. I quote the introductory sentence so that we may grasp the possible breadth of reflective thought:

52. *Mektûbat*, 30 / *Letters*, 51-2.

53. *Mektûbat*, 30 / *Letters*, 51-2.

54. *Sözler*, 27-8 / *The Words*, 38-40.

55. *Sözler*, 322 / *The Words*, 331.

"I saw one manifestation of the *In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate* as follows: on the face of the universe, the face of the earth, and the face of man are three stamps of dominicality one within the other and each showing samples of the others..."

Later in the same discussion, Bediuzzaman expounds the verse from Sura al-Fatiha, "*You alone do we worship.*" He offers this brief literal meaning as a several-page tableau of reflective thought, which we may understand with our faculties of intellect alone, so long as we know Arabic,

As is seen from the subsequent discussion, according to Bediuzzaman, it is not even these two phrases, all the pieces recited in the prayers have similarly extensive meanings, and not only with his intellect but with all his myriad faculties, man possesses a nature whereby he may partake of all these truths. Everyone may achieve this, if they make the effort.

4) I want to note immediately at this point that Bediuzzaman says that during the obligatory five daily prayers the Companions partook of all the phrases recited with all their senses and faculties to the optimum degree. As follows:

"At one time, a single glorification unfolded to me in one of the prayers in a manner close to how the Companions perceived them, and it appeared to me as important as a month's worship. I understood through it the Companions' high worth. It meant that at the start of Islam, the effulgence and light proceeding from the sacred words had a different quality."[56]

In another discussion Bediuzzaman explains this memory further:

"One time, it occurred to me, why could wondrous individuals like Muhyiddin al-'Arabi not attain to the level of the Companions? Then, while saying, *Glory be to my Sustainer, the Most High* during the prayers, the meaning of the phrase was unfolded to me. Not in its complete meaning, but its reality in part became apparent to me. I said in my heart: if only I could perform one of the five daily prayers in the same way as this phrase, it would be better than a year's worship. After the prayers I understood that that thought and state was guidance indicating that the Companions' degree in worship could not be reached."[57]

5) In the continuation of the same passage, Bediuzzaman explains how they gained this superiority. In short: in the revolution brought about by the Qur'an,

"While opposites were separated from one another, and evils together with all their darkness, details and all who followed them, and good and perfections together with all their lights and results came face to face — at such an exciting time, all glorifications of God and recitations of His Names expressed all the levels of their meanings freshly and newly and in a young and fresh fashion. So too, under the crashing of that mighty revolution all the senses and subtle inner faculties of people were awakened, even senses like those of fancy and imagination, in an awakened and aware state, received the numerous meanings of those recitations and glorifications in accordance with their own perceptions, and absorbed them."

He then continues:

56. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Lem'alar*, Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1976, 309 / *The Flashes Collection* [Eng. trans.], Sözler Publications 1995, 424.
57. *Sözler*, 490-1 / *The Words*, 506.

"Thus, due to this wisdom, when the Companions, whose senses were awakened and subtle faculties, alert, uttered those blessed words comprising the lights of belief and glorification, they did so in all their meaning and they partook of them with all their senses."

Bediuzzaman then concludes the discussion by explaining why subsequent generations have not been able to reach the degree of the Companions:

"However, after that revolution and upheaval, the subtle faculties have gradually sunk into sleep and the senses fallen from that point of realities into heedlessness; like fruits, under the veil of familiarity, those blessed words have gradually lost their delicacy and freshness. Simply, as though drying up through exposure to the air of superficiality, only a little freshness remains, and this may be restored to its former state only through drastic surgery of a reflective and reasoning kind. Thus, it is because of this that another can reach the virtue and level the Companions attained to in forty minutes, only in forty years."[58]

Thus, Bediuzzaman does not say that the meanings and truths of the verses, glorifications and other blessed words and phrases recited during worship have been completely obscured for later generations. Resembling them to fruits that have not lost their freshness, that is, their vitality, completely, he says that they may regain it only *through drastic surgery of a reflective and reasoning kind.* "Like fruits, under the veil of familiarity, those blessed words have gradually lost their delicacy and freshness. Simply, as though drying up through exposure to the air of superficiality, only a little freshness remains, and this may be restored to its former state only *through drastic surgery of a reflective and reasoning kind.*"

At this point, in order to understand this question of *drastic surgery of a reflective and reasoning kind*, we shall recall Bediuzzaman's explanations of *You alone do we worship*, and of the affirmation of Divine unity in the supplication that starts "There is no god but God, He is one, He has no partner," which forms the Twentieth Letter and is, in all, 43 pages in length.

On studying carefully discussions of this sort in the Risale-i Nur, it is seen that certain words and phrases that we recite inattentively comprise most extensive meanings and truths, and by means of effort and exertion in reflective thought may be deciphered and revealed.

The Companions, therefore, again in Bediuzzaman's words, not through their own efforts but as a result of the spiritual purification and cleansing brought about by the disclosing of Divine immediacy, as the effulgence and blessing of the company of the Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him), perceived the instant they uttered them the meanings and truths we can reach only through great effort to think reflectively, and they actually lived them. Furthermore, they experienced this state and perceived those truths not only with a few faculties and senses such as the intellect and power of thought, but all with their faculties and emotions, which are reckoned to number thousands, and shared in them.

Surely the spiritual delight of someone who experiences such an affirmation of Divine unity and reflective thought in the obligatory prayers, would block out

58. *Sözler*, 491 / *The Words*, 507.

any feeling of physical pain caused by a few arrows, and prevent them hearing the noise around them.

I am of the opinion this state is not one of 'wonder-working' particular to the Companions, but one which exists potentially in man's innate disposition, and may be realized through exercise of the will, mental exercise and exertion. Just as we see that certain sportsmen (experts in karate) can as the result of assiduous practice and exercises split at the blow of a hand or foot a pile of rooftiles or a plank 5 to 10 centimetres thick. Such an event is considered a wonder by those with no knowledge of the sport, but by those who practise it is explained easily: "Through practice and exercises a person is able to concentrate all his strength on the blow at the moment he strikes it, and the power concentrated in the heavy blow is able to break the tiles or split the plank."[59]

In my view, the state of the Companions described above and the state of the karate expert who breaks the tiles is subject to the same law and may be explained in the same way.

During worship, the Companions were turned to their worship with all their senses and emotions, and were as though in ecstasy through perceiving the meanings and realities of the varying degrees of the verses and phrases they recited with all their faculties and with the spiritual delight resulting from this concentrated perception, and thus were insensible to physical sensations. That is to say, the one smashes tiles through the power concentrated in his forearm, while in the other, the concentration of the subtle spiritual faculties so diminished the awareness of physical sensations as to make him insensible of them.

5) Why did the Companions behave as though Doomsday was about to break forth?

The Companions acted in accordance with the verse *The Hour has drawn nigh*[60] and believed that the signs of the Last Day had appeared in their own times. When asked by certain unfair people:

> "Why did the Companions of the Prophet with their vigilant hearts and keen sight, who had been taught all the details of the hereafter, suppose something that would occur one thousand four hundred years later to be close to their century, as though their ideas had deviated a thousand years from the truth?",

Bediuzzaman offered the Companions' religiosity as the explanation:

> "Because, through the effulgence of the Prophet's conversation, the Companions thought of the hereafter more than anyone, and knowing the transience of the world and understanding the Divine wisdom in the hour of Doomsday being vague, assumed a position of always awaiting the world's appointed hour and worked seriously for the hereafter."[61]

59. See, Art. Karate, *Ana Britanica Ansiklopedisi*, Istanbul 1989.
60. Qur'an, 54:1.
61. *Sözler*, 343 / *The Words*, 353.

4. Truths about the Companions in the Qur'an which Bediuzzaman disclosed

I stated above that the Islamic *'ulama* based their views concerning the Companions' justice on verses of the Qur'an. Bediuzzaman too says that they are praised in the Qur'an and other revealed scriptures.[62] But the things Bediuzzaman brought to light in this connection are not to be found in the works of previous scholars.

In the Seventh Flash, Bediuzzaman deduced seven sorts of predictions about the Unseen from the verses at the end of Sura al-Fath, which are recited as an *'ashr*. These are in part connected with the Companions.

i) *And those who are with him are strong against the unbelievers, [but] compassionate among each other.* In this verse, he points out that the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs are being alluded to, and the setting-up of the Caliphate, and their fine attributes, and the events that would befall them in the future.[63]

ii) *This is their similitude in the Torah, and their similitude in the Gospel...* It was a true miracle that an unlettered and untaught Prophet who had never seen the Torah or Gospels should have related the descriptions of the Companions in those books.[64] Bediuzzaman gives details in *Mektûbat* (Letters) of which verses in the Torah and Gospels give which descriptions of the Companions.[65]

iii) Bediuzzaman points out that the number of times each of the letters in the passage from the verse *He it is Who has sent His Messenger* to the end is repeated, coincides with the number of the Companions of Badr, Uhud, and the Suffa whose names began with those letters.[66] Moreover, Bediuzzaman says this last verse alludes to the different levels among the Companions:

> "Like this last verse looks to the Companions with its sentences, so does it look to their situations with its phrases. And like it describes their attributes with its words, so too with its letters, and with the repetition of the number of letters, does it allude to classes of famous Companions like the Companions of Badr, of Uhud, of Hunayn, of the Bench, and of Ridwan. It also expresses many further mysteries through 'coincidences' (*tawāfuqāt*) and *abjad* reckoning, which are branches of the science of *jafr*, and keys to it."[67]

In expounding the verse, *All... are in the company of those on whom is the grace of God —of the Prophets, the Veracious, the Witnesses, and the Righteous: how goodly a company are these!*, he says that it indicates the most famous of five classes of men who are said to receive God's grace, then states that with the phrase *of the Prophets*, it refers to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), with *the Veracious*, to Abu Bakr, and with *the Witnesses* [or *martyrs*], to 'Umar, 'Uthman, and 'Ali. He says that the verse also alludes to their succeeding one another

62. *Sözler*, 489 / *The Words*, 505.
63. *Lem'alar*, 27 / *The Flashes Collection*, 47-8.
64. *Lem'alar*, 28 / *The Flashes Collection*, 48-9.
65. *Mektûbat* (Sixteenth Sign of the Nineteenth Letter), 148-63 / *Letters*, 200-219.
66. *Barla Lahikası*, 154.
67. *Lem'alar*, 30 / *The Flashes Collection*, 50.

as Caliph and being martyred.[68]

With *the Righteous*, it indicates eminent persons like the Companions of the Suffa and of Badr and Ridwan.

He says that with *how goodly a company are these!*, it alludes to Hasan, whose Caliphate although only six months in length, was of great benefit.[69] He deduces this allusion to Hasan from the word *goodly* (*ḥasuna*). And afterwards feeling it necessary to clarify the allusion, since it is not altogether clear, enlarges on his explanation, saying: "And through a device called in rhetoric *mustatba'āt al-tarākīb*, it alludes to the fifth Caliph's name with the phrase *How goodly (ḥasuna) company are these!*"[70]

5. Political differences among the Companions

Bediuzzaman also mentioned the question of the political differences among the Companions, which led to bloodshed. He favoured the Sunni's view in this question. The Sunni *'ulama* have said that the conflict arose from interpretations of the law (*ijtihād*) that had been carried out, that the Companions were at a level whereat they could do this, and according to the Shari'a of Islam, even if one doing this makes a mistaken judgement, he may not be censured. The Companions who were the cause of war should not therefore be criticized because of their judgements, which were in error.[71] Bediuzzaman says here:

> "Since the interpretations had been purely for God's sake and for the benefit of Islam, and war arose from interpretation of the law, we may surely say that both those who killed and those who were killed gained Paradise, and both acted rightfully."[72]

1) The right and wrong sides

Besides saying that the sides should not have condemned one another because of the differences in interpretation which has been the cause of bloodshed, he said that 'Ali had been correct in his interpretation, and his opponents in error:

> "However accurate was 'Ali's interpretation and however much in error those who opposed him, they still did not deserve punishment. For if one who interprets the Law extracts the truth, he gains two rewards, but if he does not extract it, he still earns one reward, the reward for interpreting which is a form of worship; he is forgiven his error."[73]

2) The ruling of those in error in the dissension

In addition to confirming that the Companions should not be blamed for being

68. We see a further explanation connected with this subject: "... and that after the Veracious One there would three martyr Caliphs. Because *Martyrs* (*shuhadā'*) is plural, and the lowest number [in Arabic grammar] of the plural is three." (*Lem'alar*, 33 / *Flashes*, 54)

69. *Lem'alar*, 30-1 / *The Flashes Collection*, 53-4.

70. *Lem'alar*, 33 / *The Flashes Collection*, 54.

71. Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, xvi, 142; al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Muslim*, xviii, 11.

72. *Mektûbat*, 50 / *Letters*, 74.

73. *Mektûbat*, 50 / *Letters*, 74. The Hadith on which this principle is based is this: "If in making a judgement of the Law, a judge is correct, he will receive two rewards; and if he is wrong in his judgement, he will [still] receive one reward." *Abū Dā'ūd*, 'Aqdiyya, 2, No: 3574; *Tirmidhī*, Aḥkām, 2, No: 1326.

involved in the strife, Bediuzzaman accepts that some of them perpetrated serious errors in these internal disturbances. This view he concludes from the word *forgiveness* in verse 29 at the end of Sura al-Fath, which praises the Companions. He says:

> "It indicates through the word *forgiveness*, that although since the Companions' excellent qualities were being praised they should have been promised the greatest rewards, in the future strife would be the cause of serious faults arising among them. For forgiveness indicates the existence of faults. And at that time the things most demanded by the Companions, the greatest bounty, would be forgiveness. The greatest reward would be absence of punishment, due to forgiveness."[74]

It must have been due to the magnitude of the Companions' service in the establishment of Islam that serious errors they were to commit subsequently were deemed small and did not prevent them attracting Divine mercy. This matter is illustrated by the incident involving Khatib b. Abi Balta:

> "Although God's Messenger (PBUH) took every precaution during the preparations for the conquest of Mecca so that news of it would not be leaked outside, Khatib secretly sent a letter to the Meccans informing them and the letter was intercepted. 'Umar looked on this as treachery and dissembling, and when asked that he should be killed, God's Messenger's reply is important in defining the attitude the Umma should adopt when considering certain 'errors' encountered in the Companions and towards such Companions. God's Messenger (PBUH) said: 'But he fought at Badr. Almighty God was certainly aware of the circumstances of those who fought at Badr for He said: Do as you will for I have forgiven you.'"[75]

3) The nature of the dissension

Bediuzzaman describes briefly as follows the nature of the strife which began during the Caliphate of 'Ali:

> "The war called the Event of the Camel between 'Ali and Talha, and Zubayr and Aisha the Veracious (May God be pleased with all of them) was the struggle between pure justice and relative justice."[76]
>
> "When it comes to Imam 'Ali's war with Mu'awiya at Siffin, that was a war over the Caliphate and rule. That is to say, taking the injunctions of religion, the truths of Islam, and the hereafter as the basis, Imam 'Ali sacrificed some of the laws of government and pitiless demands of politics to them. Whereas Mu'awiya and his supporters left aside resoluteness and favoured permissiveness in order to strengthen Islamic society with their policies of government; they supposed themselves to be compelled to do so due to the demands of politics, and choosing permissiveness, fell into error.
>
> "As for Hasan and Husayn's struggle against the Umayyads, that was a war between religion and nationalism. That is, the Umayyads planted the Islamic state on Arab nationalism and put the bonds of nationalism before those of Islam, therefore causing harm in two respects:
>
> **"The First Respect:** They offended the other nations and frightened them off.

74. *Lem'alar*, 29 / *The Flashes Collection*, 49-50.

75. *Bukhārī*, al-Maghāzī, 9; Jihād, 141, 195; Tafsīr al-Mumtaḥina, 1; al-Isti'dhān, 23; al-Istitāba, 9; *Muslim*, Faḍā'il al-Ṣaḥāba, 161. For explanation, see, *Kütüb-ü Sitte Muhtasarı ve Şerhi*, xii, 245-9.

76. *Mektûbat*, 50 / *Letters*, 74.

"**The Other:** Since the principles of racialism and nationalism do not follow justice and right, they are tyranny. They do not proceed on justice. ... Thus, Husayn took the bonds of religion as the basis, and struggled against them as someone who executes justice, until he attained the rank of martyrdom."[77]

4) Why did the Companions not discover the troublemakers?

Bediuzzaman was asked an interesting question about the Companions:

"Why didn't the Companions discover the troublemakers with the eye of sainthood, so that it resulted in three of the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs being martyred? For it is said that the lesser Companions are greater than the greatest saints?"

The first part of Bediuzzaman's answer to this is an explanation of 'the greater sainthood,' which the Companions manifested. He says that together with being short, this way of sainthood is extremely elevated, that its 'wonders' are few but virtues many, that illuminations and wonder-working are to be encountered infrequently on it, and that the majority of instances of 'wonder-working' are involuntary and are unexpected Divine bestowals. He then says that the dissension was not the work of a handful of Jews, but the result of the widespread social discontent which developed on the mixing together of the ideas of the many different peoples who had entered Islam. The people whose former religions had been abrogated, and old empires and states, which had been the cause of their pride, swept away, were awaiting the opportunity to take their revenge. In replying to the question of why 'Umar had not seen his murderer who was at his side, although he had seen his commander, Sariya, a month's distance away when he was being pressed in on all sides, and had given him orders saying: "Sariya! The mountain, the mountain!", he recalled that Divine will was fundamental.[78]

An evidence recalled here was the position of Jacob: although he perceived the odour of Joseph's shirt from Egypt, he did not see him in the well at Cana'an close by. According to Bediuzzaman, when asked this, Jacob replied:

"Our state is like lightning; sometimes it appears and sometimes it is hidden. Sometimes it is as though we are seated on the highest spot and can see everywhere. And sometimes we cannot see even the arch of our foot."[79]

5) The wisdom in the dissensions

Bediuzzaman also draws attention to a number of beneficial results of the strife and dissension that occurred among the Companions. He said in connection with Companions and the generation that followed them:

"Just as a heavy spring rainstorm stirs into action the potentialities of all the varieties of plants, seeds, and trees, and causes them to develop, so each blossoms in its particular way and performs the duties inherent in its nature, so too the dissension visited on the Companions and their successors stirred their potentialities into action, which were all different and like seeds; it spurred them on. Exclaiming,

77. *Mektûbat*, 51 / *Letters*, 74.
78. *Mektûbat*, 47-9 / *Letters*, 71-3.
79. *Mektûbat*, 49 / *Letters*, 73.

'Islam is in danger! Fire! Fire!', it put fear into all the groups and made them hasten to protect Islam. According to its abilities, each of the groups shouldered one of the numerous different duties of the Islamic community and strove in utmost earnestness. Some working for the preservation of the prophetic Hadiths, some for the preservation of the Shari'a, some for the preservation of the truths of belief, some for the preservation of the Qur'an, and so on; each group undertook a particular duty. They strove to perform the duties of Islam. Numerous multicoloured flowers opened. And through the storm, seeds were cast to all the corners of the most extensive world of Islam; half the earth was transformed into a rose-garden. But sadly, together with the roses, the thorns of the deviant sects appeared in the garden."[80]

Under the heading *An Important Question*, he asks the wisdom in the Companions being defeated at the end of Uhud and beginning of Hunayn, and replies to the effect that they were not defeated:

"Among the idolators were many persons like Khalid who in the future would be equal to the leading Companions of that time. Therefore, so as not to degrade them entirely in the view of the future, which for them would be glorious and honourable, Divine wisdom gave them in the past immediate recompense for their future good works and did not completely destroy their pride. That is to say, the Companions of the past were defeated by the Companions of the future, so that the future Companions would enter Islam, not through fear of the flashing sword, but through zeal for the flash of truth, and so that they and their natural valour should not be brought low."[81]

6. The Family of the Prophet

There are numerous narrations about the Companions in the Hadiths of God's Messenger (Peace and blessings be upon him). Some of them praise and exalt all the Companions. Others relate stories about specific individuals. Many of these may be seen in the sections entitled *Manāqib* and *Faḍā'il* in the books of Hadith.

In the appropriate places, Bediuzzaman includes examples of all these different sorts of Hadith, corroborating the Companions' virtues. Among the general one's are:

"My Companions are like the stars in the skies."[82]

"The best age is my age (the Companions), then those who follow them (*tābi'īn*), then those who follow them (*atbā' al-tābi'īn*)."[83] "Do not villify my Companions. If any of you were to bestow on others gold to the amount of Mount Uhud, it would not be the equivalent of half a handful bestowed by one of my Companions."[84] So too he mentions the virtues and stories of individual Companions like Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn (May God be pleased with all of them).

It should be stated immediately that primarily Bediuzzaman points out and discusses groups or individuals whose names have been mixed up in polemic or

80. *Mektûbat*, 92-3 / *Letters*, 131-2.
81. *Lem'alar*, 26 / *The Flashes Collection*, 46.
82. *Sözler*, 493 / *The Words*, 509-10.
83. *Sözler*, 493 / *The Words*, 510.
84. *Sözler*, 496 / *The Words*, 512. *Mudd* is a dry measure which equals a little over half a kilo.

conflict within the Umma; he allots more space to them. His aim here is to correct mistaken views about them, and to point out to the confused the correct positions in those matters, and the sound views that should be established in their hearts. It is perhaps for this reason that there are frequent discussions in the Risale-i Nur about the Prophet's Family.

1) Who are the Prophet's Family?

It should be mentioned before moving on to the main subject that details about the Family of the Prophet have been disputed by the Islamic *'ulama*. There have been serious differences between the Shi'a and the Sunnis.

It has been generally agreed that the Prophet's Family consists of the five persons mentioned in the Hadith about the People of the Cloak,[85] God's Messenger (PBUH), 'Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn. It is also accepted that the children of all of the Messenger's wives, and his grandchildren and other relatives, that is, the Bani Hashim, are the Prophet's Family. Some scholars have included among these some who received the favour of the Prophet who were not blood relations, Salman al-Farisi and 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (May God be pleased with them).[86] In some Hadiths, God's Messenger counted 'the pious' among his Family.[87]

When expounding the verse: *Say: I ask no recompense of you save love of close kin*, Bediuzzaman offers a different explanation in the light of the Hadith "I leave you two things; if you adhere to them, you will find salvation: one is God's Book, the other is my Family." He says:

> "What was intended by the Family of the Prophet in respect of the function of prophetood were the practices of the Prophet. Just as someone who abandoned the practices could not truly be a member of his Family, so such a person could not be a true friend to them."[88]

For in other Hadiths, the second of the two things God's Messenger (PBUH) left behind was his "Sunna" or practices.[89]

85. In order to understand love of the Prophet's Family, we should note Bediuzzaman's reply to a question about the People of the Cloak (*Āl al-'Abā'*): "There are two sides to your question this time: one is about the inner meaning of the People of the Cloak and that is a secret. But I am not party to it that I should tell you, or not all secrets should be divulged in writing. For a manifestation of the Muhammadan Reality was apparent in the People of the Cloak." Secondly, Bediuzzaman points out the aspect of the People of the Cloak Hadith which is in Muslim. I give a translation here so that it may be understood: Hz. A'isha (May God be pleased with her) relates: "One morning God's Messenger, Upon whom be blessings and peace, came out wearing an embroidered cloak of black wool. Then Hasan b. 'Ali came and he took him under the cloak. He was followed by Husayn, whom he took under the cloak. Then Fatima arrived, and he took her under it as well. Then 'Ali came, and taking him under the cloak as well, recited the verse '[And God only wishes] to remove all abomination from you, members of the Family, and to make you pure and spotless.' (33:33) (*Muslim*, Faḍā'il al-Ṣaḥāba, 61).

Bediuzzaman writes that he had composed the following couplet with their names as healing for worldly tribulations a person was suffering and for seeking intercession against perdition in the hereafter: *I have five and with them will still a raging plague: Mustafa, Murtaza, his two sons, and Fatima.* (*Barla Lahikası*, 187)

86. For more details, see, "Ehl-i Beyt," Mustafa Öz, in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, 1st. ed., x, 498-500.

87. *Abū Dā'ūd*, Fitan, 1, No: 4242.

88. *Lem'alar*, 19 / *The Flashes Collection*, 38.

89. *Abū Dā'ūd*, Manāsik, 56; *al-Muwaṭṭa'*, Qadar, 3; *Ibn Māja*, Manāsik, 8.

2) Love for the Prophet's Family

Bediuzzaman says that some scholars base their understanding of the Prophet's Family on the phrase *close kin* in the above verse. Alluding to this understanding, he says: "According to one interpretation, the meaning of the verse, *Say: I ask of you no recompense save love of close kin* is that 'the Most Noble Messenger (PBUH) wants no reward for carrying out the duty of messengership; he wants only love for his family.'"[90] In another place,[91] Bediuzzaman states explicitly that love for the Prophet's Family is commanded by the Qur'an, and here gives a convincing explanation of the misplaced idea of 'taking advantage of family connections.' The concern and love God's Messenger (PBUH) showed towards his close relatives was always related to the duties of prophethood. This was based on two reasons:[92]

1) In the future, persons would emerge from the Prophet's Family who would perform great services for Islam, like 'Abd al-Qadir Gilani, Zayn al-'Abidin, Ja'far al-Sadiq, etc. God's Messenger's (PBUH) kissing the head of his blessed grandson Hasan was to approve and applaud the services of the great persons who would spring from his line.[93] From this point of view, the Prophet's Family were the source and preservers of the Prophet's Sunna or practices and the Shari'a of Islam. They were bound to Islam more powerfully than other people. "They were followers of Islam by nature, birth, and temperament. Even if natural partiality is weak and unworthy, or unjustifiable even, it cannot be given up."[94]

2) Another point is that the Prophet's Family constitute an element of unity in the Islamic world. It is the most numerous and widely scattered family of the Islamic world, and the only one that is so glorious and honourable and has won its respect and confidence. There is no other family that is so mutually supportive together with being so numerous and enlightened.[95] The Islamic world can unite and progress spiritually and morally only by uniting around such a family.[96] There are not only spiritual leaders amongst them, but outward commanders.[97] When the Mahdi appears, he will carry out his mission relying on the numerous army the Prophet's Family forms.[98]

According to Bediuzzaman, the Islamic Caliphate was not established in the Prophet's Family, not because they were unworthy of it, but because fleeting, deceptive worldly rule was inappropriate for that lofty line:

> "...The Prophet's Family had been appointed to preserve the decrees of the Qur'an and the truths of Islam... In fact, the Caliphate of the Fatimid dynasty .... showed that worldly rule was not suitable for the Prophet's Family, for it caused them to

90. *Lem'alar*, 18 / *The Flashes Collection*, 37.

91. *Mektûbat*, 98 / *Letters*, 137.

92. *Lem'alar*, 18-19 / *The Flashes Collection*, 37-8.

93. *Lem'alar*, 18 / *The Flashes Collection*, 36-7.

94. *Lem'alar*, 19 / *The Flashes Collection*, 38.

95. *Şualar*, 381.

96. *Lem'alar*, 19 / *The Flashes Collection*, 38; *Mektûbat*, 412 / *Letters*, 515.

97. Examples of these outward commanders are Sayyid Ahmad Sanusi, Sayyid Yahya, and Sayyid Idris. See, *Mektûbat*, 412 / *Letters*, 515.

98. *Mektûbat*, 412 / *Letters*, 515.

neglect their primary duty, the defence of religion and the service of Islam. When, on the other hand, they gave up worldly rule, they brilliantly and successfully served Islam and the Qur'an."[99]

7. 'Ali and the 'Alawis (Shi'is)

1) 'Ali (May God be pleased with him)

A person Bediuzzaman discusses in particular is 'Ali b. Abi Talib. We learn the reason for this in his explanation of there being numerous Hadiths about him. Hadiths describing the virtues of the other Rightly-Guided Caliphs, like Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthman, are few in number relative to those about 'Ali's virtues. Bediuzzaman explains this as follows:

> "The reason the Hadiths praising 'Ali rather than the other three Caliphs have become so widespread is that the people of truth, that is, the Sunnis, spread many narrations about him in response to the Umayyads and Kharijites attacking and disparaging him unjustly. Since the other Rightly-Guided Caliphs were not subject to such criticism and detraction, no need was felt to spread Hadiths about them."[100]

Thus, Bediuzzaman discusses 'Ali at length most probably to correct mistaken ideas about him of both extremes, in favour and against. One may also surmise that he was aiming to correct the very unfavourable ideas of the Shi'is about the Sunnis' views on 'Ali. For he tried to reconcile these two groups of Islam and remove the enmity between them.

'Ali holds greater importance for Bediuzzaman than the other Companions, and he felt greater closeness to him, because in some of his poems, as a powerful instance of 'wonder-working' (*keramet*), 'Ali (May God be pleased with him) made a number of predictions about Bediuzzaman, his works, his students, and their struggle (explicit to the extent of there being thirty to forty allusions),[101] and he indicated to Bediuzzaman the way he should take and which tactics to employ. Bediuzzaman wrote in one place:

> "Imam 'Ali is the Risale-i Nur's master, who with his symbolic allusions in his *qasida 'Jaljalutiya'* shows much concern for the Risale-i Nur, and is my particular master in the truths of belief."[102]

This master takes precedence over the other Companions in many matters such as valour, knowledge, sainthood, and representing the Prophet's Family. He held a position they could not rise to.[103]

2) The Shi'i-Sunni Question

Bediuzzaman mentions the question of the conflict between 'Ali and the other Companions, but is in favour of not over-emphasizing it or exacerbating it. He says that former scholars also preferred to remain silent on these matters:

> "By remaining silent, the early scholars of Islam and the Sunni authorities closed those doors. Saying: 'God did not involve us in their quarrels and kept our hands

99. *Mektûbat*, 92 / *Letters*, 131.
100. *Lem'alar*, 21 / *The Flashes Collection*, 40.
101. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Emirdağ Lahikası*, Istanbul, Sinan Matbaası 1959, i, 207.
102. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, i, 200.
103. *Lem'alar*, 21-2 / *The Flashes Collection*, 41-2.

> clean. So in gratitude for this, we shall keep our tongues clean by not talking about them,' they did not open those doors. Those who wronged the Prophet's Family are now paying such a penalty in the hereafter, there is no need for us to assist in this by attacking them. While in return for temporary torment and trouble, the Prophet's Family are receiving recompense so lofty we cannot comprehend it with our minds."[104]

Bediuzzaman expressed as follows the distress he felt at the Sunni-Shi'i conflict, which though in reality is meaningless, has produced very bitter fruits:

> "To think of and exacerbate the most grievous, the very worst, wound of the Islamic world, which for one thousand three hundred years has caused it to weep and all the people of reality to sigh at the pity of it, causes me distress greater than I can bear in my particular way."[105]

Thus, although his principle was to remain silent about matters of conflict, Bediuzzaman did not neglect to indicate points shared by the Sunnis and Shi'is, on which they could unite. He points out in a very delicate manner some of the excesses of the Shi'a. I shall now set out some of these:

1) 'Ali was correct in his interpretations (*ijtihad*) and his opponents were wrong. 'Ali wanted to take pure justice as the basis, while his opponents made relative justice their principle. Pure justice is the justice of the Qur'an; so long as it is possible to apply it, relative justice is not permissible.[106]

2) 'Ali's opponents were of two types:

i. "Evil rogues like Yazid and Walid;" the Sunnis agree that they should be cursed.

ii. The majority, who were not of the first type; they did not dispute 'Ali's spiritual greatness, but were attempting to strike at his political rule.[107]

3) The Shi'i's considering 'Ali to be the highest in virtue, even going so far as to make this a tenet of belief, while the Sunnis considering him to be fourth, is a question that should not be exaggerated. For in fact the Sunnis also accept 'Ali's unattainable greatness in some particular virtues. For instance, 'Ali being the representative of the Prophet's Family, and this collective personality "representing the Muhammadan reality," affords him an incomparable superiority over the others. He also takes precedence over them in particular virtues, like valour, knowledge, and sainthood.[108] The extraordinarily laudatory Hadiths of the Prophet about 'Ali look to these aspects. Bediuzzaman gives two of these as examples: "The descendants of each of the prophets are from himself. My descendants of those of 'Ali." "Whoever I am a friend of, 'Ali too is his friend." He says that the purpose of these and similar Hadiths was to console 'Ali about the events that were to befall him, and save him from despair, and to save the Umma of God's Messenger (PBUH) from thinking unfavourably about him.[109]

104. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, i, 206.
105. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, i, 206.
106. *Mektûbat*, 50 / *Letters*, 74-5.
107. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, i, 207-8.
108. *Lem'alar*, 22 / *The Flashes Collection*, 42.
109. *Lem'alar*, 20-1 / *The Flashes Collection*, 40.

4) The Sunnis are right to put 'Ali in fourth place in respect of virtue. For when considering the Rightly-Guided Caliphs Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthman (May God be pleased with all of them) as regards this matter, they took general virtue as their principle. The virtues that set them in front arose from "... their share in the legacy of prophethood and the establishment of its laws [which had been] Divinely bestowed."[110]

Bediuzzaman considers the delay in 'Ali receiving the Caliphate in a social and human context from the point of view of wisdom. He says that if 'Ali had been Caliph after the death of God's Messenger (PBUH), it would have given rise to disunity among the Companions, just when they were in most need of unity. Because "his uncompromising nature, and fearless, ascetic, heroic, and independent character, and widely known courage" would "have aroused in many persons and tribes a tendency to compete," and "division would have resulted." Indeed, this is what occurred during his caliphate. It was because of this that it was delayed.

Another reason was that when the dissension erupted among the peoples from whom would emerge the seventy-three sects the Prophet had predicted, someone of the boldness and sagacity of 'Ali, and a force as powerful and commanding of respect as the Hashimites and Prophet's Family, were necessary so that the dissension could be resisted. And indeed he did so.

In addition, 'Ali reduced the excesses of the Umayyads, whose desire was for worldly rule.[111]

5) Bediuzzaman considers excusable the 'Sainthood Shi'a,' who have excessive love of 'Ali because of his sainthood. He says they should not be blamed for their love. However, he puts the condition that this love should not turn into disparagement of and enmity towards the other Caliphs.[112]

6) Bediuzzaman does not consider right the claims of the 'Caliphate Shi'a,' who display excessive love of 'Ali because they believe he was the rightful Caliph appointed by God's Messenger, and therefore do not accept the licitness of the other Caliphs. He says:

> "As for the Caliphate Shi'a, they have no rights before the Sunnis other than shame. For although they claim to have tremendous love for 'Ali, they disparage him, and their creed necessitates accusing him of immorality. For they say that although Abu Bakr *al-Siddiq* and 'Umar were acting unjustly, 'Ali feigned approval for them; according to Shi'i terminology, he dissimulated. That is, he was frightened of them and behaved hypocritically."

Bediuzzaman rejects utterly that 'Ali, renowned for his courage, would for twenty years hypocritically feign approval for people he did not like. The Sunnis, the people of truth, have in no way denigrated 'Ali and are unanimous in this.

> "If 'Ali had not considered the Rightly-Guided Caliphs to be right, he would not have recognized them for a minute, nor obeyed them. It means that since he thought them right and preferable, he surrendered his endeavour and courage on the way of justice."[113]

110. *Lem'alar*, 22 / *The Flashes Collection*, 41.
111. *Mektûbat*, 91-2 / *Letters*, 130-1.
112. *Lem'alar*, 22 / *The Flashes Collection*, 40.

7) Bediuzzaman warns those who love 'Ali for his personal perfections. He says it resembles the love of Christians for Jesus, and mentions a Hadith in this connection. God's Messenger (PBUH) said to 'Ali:

> "As was true of Jesus, two groups of people will perish on your account: one because of excessive love, the other because of excessive enmity. Christians, on account of their deep love for Jesus, transgressed the limits and called him—God forbid!—'the son of God,' while the Jews, because of their hostility, went to the other extreme by denying his message and virtue. Similarly, some will also incur loss through their exaggerated affection for you. For them is the insulting name of Rafida.[114] And certain others will be excessively hostile to you. They are the Kharijites and the extremist partisans of the Umayyads, who will be called Nasiba."[115]

Bediuzzaman says that Christians loving Jesus with the idea that he is God will not profit them, indeed, it harms them. Similarly, it is harmful to have excessive love for 'Ali, and does not profit those that love him in that way. Love of this sort may also lead to enmity towards to some of the other Companions. 'Ali should therefore be loved because of his closeness to the Prophet, his service to Islam, and the Prophet's love for him, and for similar reasons. Such love is of value in God's sight and in that of His Messenger.

3) The true Alawis are the Sunnis

Bediuzzaman states that the praise in the Hadith for "'Ali's followers (Shi'a)"[116] is due to the Sunnis, for they love 'Ali earnestly without denigrating him, and avoid the excessive love considered dangerous in the Hadith.[117] "The Prophet's praise of 'Ali's followers in the Hadiths refers to the Sunnis. For those of 'Ali's followers who love him in a moderate fashion are the Sunnis, who are the People of Truth."[118]

4) The claims of the Wahhabis should not be ascribed to the Sunnis

Bediuzzaman considers the Shi'a-Sunni questions in a conciliatory spirit, and says the Shi'a should take note of one point, and that is their attributing to the Sunnis the false ideas of the Kharijis and Wahhabis. Basically, at the present time it is possible to encounter these ideas in some Sunnis who cannot be called Sunnis in the classic meaning:

> "... some atheists criticize 'Ali. They say, God forbid, that since he did not understand politics, he was not entirely worthy of the Caliphate and could not govern. Because of these unjust accusations of theirs, 'Alawis [Shi'is] feel affronted at the

113. *Lem'alar*, 23 / *The Flashes Collection*, 42.
114. al-Haythamī, *Majmū' al-Zawā'id*, x, 22.
115. *Mektûbat*, 97-8 / *Letters*, 137.
116. The meaning of the Hadith referred to here is: "O son of Abu Talib! You and your supporters will go to Paradise." *Musnad Aḥmad*, i, 148.
117. What is referred to here is the Hadith mentioned above which compares him with Jesus (UWP).
118. *Lem'alar*, 21 / *The Flashes Collection*, 41.

Sunnis. Whereas the principles and basic beliefs of the Sunnis do not necessitate these ideas. Indeed, they prove the opposite. The Sunnis cannot be condemned because of ideas such as those which come from Kharijites and atheists. Rather, the Sunnis are firmer followers of 'Ali than the 'Alawis [Shi'is]."[119]

Bediuzzaman sets forth his views on this point in *Mektûbat* (Letters) in question and answer form:

"If you ask: What was the reason for Imam 'Ali's lack of success relative to his predecessors in regard to the Islamic Caliphate, despite his extraordinary capabilities, unusual intelligence, and great deservedness?

"The Answer: That blessed person was worthier of important duties other than politics and rule. If he had been completely successful in politics and government, he would have been unable to truly gain the meaningful title of 'King of Sainthood.' Whereas he gained a spiritual rule far surpassing the external and political Caliphate, and became like a Universal Master; in fact, his spiritual rule will continue even until the end of the world."[120]

5) Advice to the Shi'a

Bediuzzaman says the Sunnis recognize 'Ali as a spiritual guide and 'King of Sainthood,' then says:

"The 'Alawis [Shi'is] should ignore the Kharijites and atheists who have deservedly earned the enmity of both the 'Alawis [Shi'is] and the Sunnis, and not take sides against the People of Truth."[121]

6) Confidence in the Shi'a

Bediuzzaman has confidence in the 'Alawis [Shi'is] despite the errors of some of them "abandoning the Prophet's Sunna out of spite for the Sunnis."[122] He says:

"To whatever excesses they go, even if they are 'Rafizis,' Shi'i's who take as their way love for the Prophet's Family do not embrace atheism and absolute disbelief. Due to their love, they adhere fervently to Islam."[123]

This belief and confidence prompts Bediuzzaman to speak of a considerable bond between the Risale-i Nur students and the 'Alawis [Shi'is]:

"Since the Risale-i Nur students' master is Imam 'Ali (May God be pleased with him) and love of the Prophet's Family is basic to the way of the Risale-i Nur, it surely demands that true 'Alawis should enthusiastically enter its sphere [of the Risale-i Nur]."[124]

7) Call to unity

Bediuzzaman concludes his lengthy discussion of the Shi'a with a call to unity between them and the Sunnis:

"And so, O Sunnis, who are the People of Truth, and 'Alawis, whose way is love of the Prophet's Family! Quickly put an end to this meaningless, disloyal, unjust,

119. *Lem'alar*, 23 / *The Flashes Collection*, 43.
120. *Mektûbat*, 51 / *Letters*, 75.
121. *Lem'alar*, 23 / *The Flashes Collection*, 43.
122. *Lem'alar*, 23 / *The Flashes Collection*, 43.
123. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, i, 238.
124. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, i, 238.

and harmful dispute between you. Otherwise the atheistic current which is now so influential will make one of you a tool against the other, and use the one to crush the other. And after defeating the one it will destroy the tool. Since you are believers in Divine unity, it is essential to leave aside unimportant matters which necessitate division while there are a hundred fundamental sacred bonds between you which command brotherhood and unity."[125]

8. Miscellaneous points

Bediuzzaman both clarified well-known incidents in which the Companions were involved, and he offered explanations for a number of questions that might be thought of as secondary. We shall give a few examples of these:

1) Why are there few narrations from some of the leading Companions?

As is known, some of the Companions narrated numerous Hadith. In particular Abu Hurayra (May God be pleased with him); a Muslim like him taking the lead in relating Hadiths in the seventh year of the Hijra has since early times been the cause of gossip against the Companions. Bediuzzaman also mentioned this with the intention of providing a reasonable explanation:

"***If it is asked*** ...why are many narrated from Anas, Jabir, and Abu Hurayra, and few related from Abu Bakr and 'Umar?

"***The Answer:*** ... some of the scholars among the Companions were charged with the duty of instructing succeeding centuries in the Hadiths of the Prophet, working with all their strength for this end. Yes, Abu Hurayra devoted his entire life to memorizing Hadiths, while 'Umar was occupied with the world of politics and the Caliphate. 'Umar therefore narrated very few traditions, relying on persons like Abu Hurayra, Anas, and Jabir, to teach the Hadiths to the Muslim community."[126]

2) The Prophet's (PBUH) marriage with Zaynab

Bediuzzaman mentioned this question, which has been explained in various ways in the books of Hadith and Qur'anic commentaries. He says first that the purpose of God's Messenger taking numerous wives was that his wives were "the transmitters and narrators of the private matters of religion, and injunctions of the Shari'a which were manifested from his private conduct in the personal sphere," and that "perhaps half of the personal matters of religion and the injunctions concerning them come from them. That is to say, numerous wives of differing temperament were required to perform this necessary duty." He then moves on to the question of the Messenger's marriage with Zaynab. A summary is as follows:

i. Zayd found himself to be unequal to her:

"That is to say, with his perceptiveness, Zayd realized that Zaynab had been created with an elevated character different to his and that it was in her nature to be a prophet's wife. Since he found himself to be by nature unequal to her as a spouse and this caused incompatibility, he divorced her."

125. *Lem'alar*, 23 / *The Flashes Collection*, 43.
126. *Mektûbat*, 121 / *Letters*, 165.

ii. God's Messenger took Zaynab at the Divine command:

"As indicated by the verse, *We joined her in marriage to you* (33:37) showing that it was a heavenly contract, this marriage was out of the ordinary, above external relations, and purely on the orders of Divine Determining. Thus, the Most Noble Messenger (Upon whom be blessings and peace) submitted to the decree of Divine Determining and was compelled to do so; it was not at the behest of carnal desire."[127]

The striking thing here is the great delicacy with which the matter is discussed. The incompatibility between Zayd and Zaynab is expressed as resulting from their inequality. Also, he does not include any of the unpleasant imaginary details given in some books and attributed to God's Messenger —even if they have been related as stories.

3) Some others

Bediuzzaman provides examples of some of the Prophet's predictions connected with leading Companions:

i - God's Messenger (PBUH) said that Abu Bakr and 'Umar would outlive him, and would be both his Caliphs, and would act for God's sake and within the bounds of the pleasure of God and His Prophet, and he said: "Encumbent on you is following the path of those who come after me, Abu Bakr and 'Umar."[128]

ii - He predicted that 'Uthman would be Caliph, his deposal would be sought, and that he would be wrongfully assassinated while reading the Qur'an.[129]

iii - He predicted that "'Abdullah [b. Zubayr] would lead the Muslims with extraordinary bravery, would face terrible attacks, and that because of him fearsome events would befall people. What he foretold came about exactly."[130]

iv - He foretold the emergence of "the Umayyad dynasty and the tyrannical rule of many of its monarchs, including Yazid and Walid, and Mu'awiya's taking over the leadership of the Muslims. He advised justice and gentleness, and said: 'When ruling, act with forbearance.'"[131]

v - He told Fatima that she would be the first of his family to join him after his death. What he foretold occurred six months later.[132]

vi - "He also told Abu Dharr: 'You will be expelled from here [Medina], will live alone and will die alone.' All this came true twenty years later."[133]

vii - He predicted that Hasan (May God be pleased with him) would reconcile the two largest armies of Islam, and forty years later he made peace with Mu'awiya, thus proving his grandfather's prophecy.[134]

viii - He said to 'Ali: "'You will fight the perfidious, the just, and the deviator,' thus predicting the battles of the Camel and Siffin, and that fought against the Kharijites."[135]

127. *Mektûbat*, 28 / *Letters*, 45-6.
128. *Mektûbat*, 93 / *Letters*, 133.
129. *Mektûbat*, 94 / *Letters*, 134.
130. *Mektûbat*, 95 / *Letters*, 134.
131. *Mektûbat*, 95 / *Letters*, 134.
132. *Mektûbat*, 96 / *Letters*, 136.
133. *Mektûbat*, 96 / *Letters*, 136.
134, *Mektûbat*, 90 / *Letters*, 128-9.

ix - "He also repeatedly predicted that after his demise, his Family would face death, calamities, and exile, and gave some details. What he had predicted later came true exactly."[136]

x - He foretold that his community would embark on sea voyages. Umm Salama asked to go on one of these. God's Messenger told her "You shall." "Forty years later she accompanied her husband, Ubada b. Samit, on the conquest of Cyprus. She died there, and her grave has ever since been visited by the believers."[137]

xi - "He also declared that a group of rebels would kill 'Ammar b. Yasir. When 'Ammar was killed at the Battle of Siffin, 'Ali cited this as proof that Mu'awiya's followers were rebellious. Also 'Amr b. 'As said: 'The rebels are murderers, not all of us.'"[138]

9. Those who insult the Companions

In the relevant discussion in the Twenty-Seventh Word, Bediuzzaman poses the questions:

"Where does the claim of the Companions' superiority spring from? And who put it forward? Why should this matter be made the subject of discussion at this time? Also, why is there this claim of equality with the great interpreters of the law (*mujtahid*)?"

He says:

"There are two groups who say these things. Some are the sincere religious scholars and men of religion who, seeing certain Hadiths, open up such discussions in order to encourage and hearten the pious and the upright at this time. We do not have anything to say to them. They are anyway few and are quickly made aware.

"The other group, however, consists of fearsome, arrogant people who want to spread their denial of the schools of law by claiming equality with the great interpreters of the law, and to further their irreligion by claiming equality with the Companions. For firstly, those people of misguidance have become depraved, and have become addicted to depravity, and cannot carry out the obligations of the Shari'a, which are an obstacle to that depravity. In order to find a pretext for themselves, they say: 'These questions may be interpreted. The schools of law are opposed to each other in these matters. And the interpreters of the law were human beings like us, and may have made mistakes. In which case, like them we shall interpret the Divine law and perform our worship as we wish. Why should we be compelled to follow them?'"

Continuing, Bediuzzaman says that those who want to change not only matters that are open to interpretation, but the essential teachings of religion, go even further and attempt to reject the Companions, "who are the bearers and

135. *Mektûbat*, 90 / *Letters*, 129.
136. *Mektûbat*, 91 / *Letters*, 129.
137. *Mektûbat*, 96 / *Letters*, 136.
138. *Mektûbat*, 99 / *Letters*, 138-9.

supports of the essentials of religion." He concludes his discussion like this:

> "Alas! It has been proved most decisively in the Twenty-Seventh Word that not animals in human form like them, but true human beings and the greatest of the saints even, who are the most perfect of true human beings, cannot win the case claiming equality with the least of the Companions."[139]

Conclusion

On the question of the Companions, Bediuzzaman concurs exactly with the consensus of the Sunnis. Those who saw God's Messenger (PBUH) even for a short time were Companions. The Companions were just; it is not permissible to refute what they said; whatever they said about God's Messenger and religion was true. The least of them even was of greater virtue than any subsequent saint of even the greatest stature. The justice of the Companions has been established by the Qur'an and Hadiths. Bediuzzaman demonstrates that the number of times each of the letters in the verse at the end of Sura al-Fath which begins *And those with him* is repeated, corresponds to the first letters of the names of the Companions of Badr, Uhud, and the Suffa.

Conversation with the Beloved of God Almighty, the Sustainer of All the Worlds, gained for the Companions a spiritual degree so high it is not possible to attain to it by any other means. For this reason, no one among humanity outside the prophets can reach their level of virtue.

Although in some Hadiths the Prophet praised those who adhere to his practices during the dissension of the end of time, when to practice religion will be as difficult as "holding fire in the palm of one's hand," and said they would take precedence over those he was addressing, Bediuzzaman said that this did not refer to absolute and general virtue; it referred to particular virtues.

Bediuzzaman's originality in discussion of the Companions lies in his having elucidated the beliefs of the Sunnis. In the books of former times, the Companions' "justice" and "superior virtue" were stated as basic principles one had to accept, like the postulates of certain sciences that have to be accepted without proof. But Bediuzzaman put an end to their being such postulates, explaining and proving most of them in a way that is easily comprehensible and acceptable.

He said that closeness to God could be obtained in two ways: (1) 'The Lesser Sainthood,' and (2) 'The Greater Sainthood.'

The Lesser Sainthood is a closeness to God obtained through spiritual journeying on the sufi path; the closeness to God of the saints is included in this. It may be obtained through striving for forty years or more.

The Greater Sainthood is, through Divine grace, the unfolding in man's spirit of God's proximity, Who is anyway closer to everything and everyone than anything else. This was manifested by the Companions. The closeness attained through Greater Sainthood is therefore not attained through the person's own efforts, but through Divine grace. Bediuzzaman illustrates these two ways with a comparison:

139. *Sözler*, 495-6 / *The Words*, 511-2.

There are two ways to reaching yesterday: one is to travel for a year and arrive at yesterday, the other is to rise spiritually through a sacred strength, and traversing time to live yesterday together with today and even tomorrow. The first way is the Lesser Sainthood, and is the way of reaching the truth and closeness to God through spiritual journeying on the sufi path. It is lengthy and attained through the person's own efforts. The second is the way of the Greater Sainthood, which is direct and Divinely bestowed, and obtained through the legacy of prophethood.

What does "the unfolding of Divine closeness" mean? The nature of this is somewhat obscure for us, yet Bediuzzaman explains it as the increase of and development in knowledge of God in the spirit as the result of purification and cleansing.

This means that through the conversation and company of the Prophet, instantaneous and extraordinary developments occurred in the Companions' spirits, which he described as "in conversation is reflection and an imbuing with colour." That is, a being illumined with the light of the God's Messenger (Blessings and peace be upon him), who was the sun of guidance and reality, and his light being reflected in the spirit.

Thus, this state obtained through brief conversation with the Prophet played a preparatory role in their spirits for perceiving and comprehending certain truths, preparing them instantaneously for the result that could be obtained by the saints only through years of endeavour and spiritual journeying.

The Companions' spirits were the recipients of this grace, described in Bediuzzaman's language as a "Divine purification and cleansing." They perceived and felt, together with all their senses and faculties which are included in the spirit and are said to number thousands, all the meanings of the recitations, supplications, and worship, which are defined as praise, glorification, and exaltation, in all their degrees. The saints annihilated the self and killed the evil-commanding soul in order to attain this purification and cleansing, but the Companions led all their senses and faculties, which had been purified by God, to the worship particular to each. The 'perfect man' is he who employs all the subtle faculties of the self in the worship particular to them. Bediuzzaman says that no one has the ability to reach the level of such a spirit and the elevatedness of such a spirit's worship.

When explaining this, Bediuzzaman relates an anecdote:

> "One time, it occurred to me, ... then while saying, *Glory be to my Sustainer, the Most High* during the prayers, the meaning of the phrase was unfolded to me. Not in its complete meaning, but its reality became partially apparent to me. I said in my heart: If only I could perform one of the five daily prayers in the same way as this phrase, it would be better than a year's worship. After the prayers I understood that that thought and state was guidance indicating that the Companions' degree in worship could not be reached."

This is a hint and key for solving certain extraordinary Hadiths about the Companions found in the books of Hadith and history, which are met incredu-

lously by some people because they have no reasonable explanation. For example, 'Abbad b. Bishr, one of the Helpers, was performing the prayers during his night-watch close to the enemy. An idolator who was marking him fired an arrow at him on seeing his silhouette. 'Abbad drew out the arrow and continued the prayers. Thinking he had missed, the idolator fired another arrow while he was performing the second 'rak'at.' In three successive *rak'ats*, 'Abbad was hit by an arrow, and he pulled each out and continued, and completed the prayers. On awaking, his companion, 'Ammar b. Yasir, saw him in a pool of blood, and learning what had happened, asked 'Abbad why he had not informed him. 'Abbad told him: "I was reciting such a sura I did not want to break it off." And for example, unable to endure having the arrow pulled out that had stuck in his foot, 'Ali said he would perform the prayers so that those with him could remove it. While Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, who was extremely disturbed by noise, was oblivious of it while performing the prayers. Numerous narrations like these state that the Companions entered a different state while performing the prayers, a sort of physical insensibility.

Bediuzzaman explains this state as their comprehending with all the faculties and senses of the spirit all the meanings of the prayers, and of the recitations (*tesbihat*) following them, in all their elevated degrees. In the same way that through long exercises and practice, experts in karate can for an instant concentrate all their force in a hand or foot, and split a 5 to 10 centimetre thick plank at one blow.

That is to say, while an average person can only perceive with one or two faculties like intellect and reflective thought one or two levels of the meanings of the *tesbihat*, the Companions would perceive all the myriad meanings of the same word with all their thousands of faculties and senses in concert. This spiritual progress in worship negates physical perception to an extraordinary degree, so that an arrow sticking in one is perhaps as trivial as being pricked by a thorn.

Bediuzzaman also subjects the Companions' justice to social analysis: the revolution brought about by Islam opened up the distance between truth and falsehood to an extraordinary degree, so having seen the ugliness of falsehood, it was not possible that the Companions should have sought it.

Bediuzzaman says that the Companions' unattainable superiority also arises from the superabundance of the merit they earned. The service performed in the establishment and propagation of Islam was of greater worth. God's Messenger (PBUH) said that if those that came after them were to give gold to the amount of Mount Uhud, it would not be equal to a half-handful of what they gave. Moreover, since they had been the means of guidance for following generations, they manifested the meaning of the saying 'the cause is like the doer.' They receive a share of the Umma's merits, just like the Prophet, so every instant their station is being raised.

Bediuzzaman states that the conflicts and wars that broke out among the Companions arose from the interpretations of the law, made for the benefit of religion, being contradictory, and that although 'Ali was correct and right, and his

opponents in error, both sides were destined for Paradise.

Bediuzzaman draws attention to the numerous instances of wisdom in the disputes between the Companions, one of which was to arouse religious zeal. He says that these events caused the zealous to take hold of religious questions, out of anxiety at "religion being lost," and that they took steps to preserve it, and in this way all the religious sciences such as Hadith, Qur'anic exegesis, *kalām*, and *fiqh* (jurisprudence), emerged and were developed.

Another important and original point in Bediuzzaman's discussions of the Companions is his view that they did not live explicitly ascetic lives. The Companions did not practise asceticism in the meaning of 'abandoning the world.' They gave importance to the world in so far as it was in conformity with God's pleasure and were more successful in worldly matters that the other civilized peoples of their time.

Taking this side of the Companions as his principle, Bediuzzaman did not advise his students to practise asceticism in the sense of giving up the world. He said that "the world should be given up with the heart, not in regard to striving for it." And he recalls that Muslims are charged with 'upholding the Word of God,' and that at this time this is possible "through material progress."

* * *

Nursi's Evaluation of Sufism*

Bilal Kuşpınar

I shall endeavour, in what follows, to bring out Nursi's evaluation of Sufi paths and doctrines in the light of his major works. Before undertaking this formidable task, I would like to offer a few important preliminary remarks concerning his general attitude towards Sufism. To begin with, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was born in eastern part of Turkey in 1873 and died in 1960 after a long life of persecution. He was one of the prominent learned men, whose erudition embraces almost all subjects of Islamic studies, ranging from language to philosophy and mysticism. The bulk of his writings displays the profundity of his pen and the acuteness of his mind. His ideas, which seem to have been the source of inspiration for the intellectual and moral life of his time and today —of course, it will continue to be so in future, so long as the educated class present him in due manner— prove him to be an independent thinker and scholar of Islam. Based on his works, I would tend to depict him as a scholar whose knowledge was encyclopedic, replete with not the facts and truths only, but also with their analytical interpretations which in most cases constitute solutions and remedies for the needs of the time. Therefore, in my view, any idea formulated by Nursi should be studied in connection with his life, character, environment and milieu, all of which have undoubtedly coloured it very deeply. Accordingly, any attempt

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* Original English text.

to give an adequate account of his thought regarding Islamic mysticism would require first a thorough investigation of his background in the light of the historical works and then a complete examination of his entire writings, which fall beyond the capacity of a person, like me, who has been initiated into the field in question through this auspicious occasion. Therefore, in what follows, I would like to present his ideas of Sufism rather in a sketchy fashion.

A general survey of his works would lead us to such an impression that Nursi, though being ever appreciative of all the Sufi schools fostered by the spirit of the Qur'an and of the Prophetic Tradition, nevertheless represents none of them. What is important for him is not to enter necessarily into a certain Sufi path, but rather to attain to the truths. This he has underlined by quoting one of the remarkable sayings of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, known as Imam Rabbani and the Revivifier of the Second Millennium 971/1563-1034/1624), —he calls him also the hero and sun of the Naqshbandi Order—: I prefer to be unveiled to me (*inkişaf*) of a single matter concerning the realities or truths of faith to thousands of intuitions (*ezvâk*), ecstasies (rapturous states) (*mevâcid*), and wondrous deeds and works (*kerâmet*).[1] In the meantime, Nursi also concedes to the following fact, which has been stated again by Sirhindi: "The ultimate point of all of the Sufi paths is the unveiling and elucidation of the truths concerning faith."[2]

As we learn from a few anecdotes about his life, Nursi, especially in his former days, had gone through a period of hesitation in quest of a way to reach the truth. In one of these hectic times, for instance, when he had been pondering upon the phenomenon of death, his heedless head, as he himself laments, had become a target of terrible and fateful blows. Such compelling situation eventually prompted him to look for a savior who would cure his psychological illness. However, he was baffled and confused once he was confronted with so many diverse ways and Shaykhs around. So, in the hope of choosing one suitable for him, he took omens (*tefe'ul*) from the book *Futuh al-Ghayb* by Shaykh Gilani and that of *Mektubat* by Shaykh Sirhindi. In his omen of the latter book, he has seen the following recommendation of Imam Rabbani after an openning address to Mirza Bediuzzaman: —to Nursi's surprise, throughout the work the word Bediuzzaman appears only twice, and his father's name was also Mirza—:

> "Make the *Tevhid* your point of direction (*kible*). In other words, take one individual as your master and follow him strictly, do not concern yourself with anyone else."[3]

By this guidance, Nursi delivered his soul from the state of perplexity and bewilderment, and thus, his heart has finally found the peace and satisfaction in that the true one, namely *Tevhid* is only to be found in the Qur'an, which is the most sublime guide and the source for all the masters of Sufi paths. Moreover, as he declares, all that flow from the Qur'an, as the Words or Lights, are the matters, not only pertaining to the intellect, but also addressing to the heart and the

1. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Mektûbat*, Istanbul: Envar Neşriyat 1993, 355.
2. Ibid.
3. *Mektûbat*, 355-6.

spirit. Therefore, those who seek to perceive the truth at any level must first and foremost resort to it with sincere and pure intention along with the utmost care and due attention.

From Nursi's detailed discussion of various subjects related to the mystical path, which appears to have been scattered throughout his two monumental works, *Sözler* (Words) and *Mektubat* (Letters) we can derive a few significant principles, in the light of which we can form what I may call a constructive-dynamic (Sufism) *Tasavvuf*, a *Tasavvuf* which is to be an integral part, not an inner dimension as some mystic writers claim, of the Shari'a. It is this form of Sufism that, as he says, will serve as a vehicle leading to the truths of the Shari'a that comprises in itself various degrees of knowledge.

In the first place, Sufism (*Tasavvuf*), Sufi order (*tarikat*), sainthood (*velayet*) and spiritual journey on the Sufi path (*seyr ü suluk*) are, according to Nursi, commonly accepted notions, and each has a telling sacred truth on its own, which was extensively described in the works of the people of intuition and of inspiration (*ehl-i zevk ve keşf*). In his own lucid definition, Sufism and the Sufi path or order if used in more technical sense, i.e. as an institution, is "a sublime human mystery" and "a human perfection;" and its major goal and aim is to reach gnosis (*marife*) and the disclosure of the realities of faith through a spiritual traveling with the feet of the heart under the Prophet Muhammad's ascent and thereby come to experience intuitively and actually, and even to a certain degree by direct witnessing, the realities of faith and of the Qur'an.[4] In other words, Sufism aims at perfecting man by letting him travel on a long spiritual path that leads ultimately to the manifestation of the truths as contained in the Qur'an. This journey takes place through the heart (*kalb*) of man, which is, as Nursi describes, "the seed and the center of the manifestation of innumerable realities of the universe. It is the heart in a sense that makes man "an all-inclusive index" (*fihriste-i camia*) in the universe, which is reminiscent of the concept of "microcosm" (*âlem sağir*), a concept which is widely held among the Sufis and attributed originally to 'Ali ibn Abi Talib.[5] And the Creator God demands man to work on his heart so as to transform it from potentiality to actuality. Due to His supreme Will, the heart, like the mind, needs to be activated but by means of the remembrance of God (*zikr-i ilahi*) during the spiritual journey so that it should be turned towards the realities of faith.

To the heart's journey on mystical path, Nursi adds, besides the remembrance of God, contemplation (*tefekkür*). For him, these two elements are the keys to the spiritual progress, for they, apart from their limitless benefits for the Hereafter, are the source of the peace on the earth. Moreover, they bring eternal solace and friendship for the people who are deprived of sociable life, leading rather a solitary life in distant places. Even social gatherings in urban and

4. *Mektûbat*, 443.
5. Nursi's notion of *fihriste-i camia* appears to be a replica of Ibn 'Arabi's that of *kawn jami'*, which occurs originally in his *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* and is mostly rendered in the Sufi literature as 'microcosmic being,' that ultimately stands for the 'perfect man' (*al-insān al-kāmil*) through whom God manifests His mystery to Himself. Ibn 'Arabi's *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, 18.

communal life do not afford an ever-lasting friendship and solace, but only a temporary consolation. Therefore, says Nursi, the people living under these unfavorable circumstances find the true solace, friendship, intimacy and the real pleasure in the remembrance of God and the contemplation. Thus, they really understand that they are not alone and that God is everywhere, and that the life is meaningful only with God.

Meanwhile, Nursi establishes an intrinsic connection between the Prophethood and the Sainthood, making one complementary to the other. He states that "sainthood is a proof of the Prophethood, so is the Sufi path for the Shari'a."[6] And the sainthood not only perceives but also confirms all the mysterious realities of *Iman* (faith) preached by the Prophethood through the contemplation of the heart and the intuition of the spirit at the level of certainty of sight (*ayne'l-yakin*). Again sainthood and the Sufi path, while both being a proof and evidence of the Prophethood and the Shari'a, represent the mysterious perfection of Islam and the means leading to its lights, as well as the source of progress (*maden-i terakkiyat*) and the fountain-head of prosperity (*medar-i tafeyyuzat*) for humanity.[7] Moreover, the Sufi path in particular, apart from its important and sublime values and spiritual results, serves as the most effective means to strengthening the brotherhood within the world of Islam.

Nursi, on the other hand, while responding to one of the questions concerning the status of the companions vis-a-vis saints, first indicates that there is a consensus amongst the Orthodox Muslim Community (*Ehl-i Sunnet ve'l-Cemaat*) on the superiority of the Companions over all mankind after the Prophet, and then offers for it three wise explanations, out of which I will mention just one, for it has a direct bearing on our subject. In this particular explanation, Nursi, resorting to the profound language of the Sufis, at first compares the Prophetic companionship or conversation (*sohbet-i nebeviyye*) to the elixir:

> "The Prophetic companionship is just like an elixir; whosoever experiences it even for a minute, attains to the illuminations of the reality, equivalent to years of mystical journey. For in companionship there is a reflection (*in'ikas*) and being colored (*insibağ*). As is well known, through reflection and submission one can rise to the highest rank in the Sublime Light of Prophethood. This is seen in the example of a Sultan's servant, who can rise through submission to the former to such a high level that a king cannot rise to it. Because of this mystery, therefore, the greatest saints cannot reach the level of the Companions. Even saints like Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, who, while they were awake, experienced many times the Prophetic companionship, even if they meet the most noble Prophet (May God's peace and blessings be upon him) while awake, and are thus honored by his companionship in this world, they still cannot reach {the level of the} the Companions. For the companionship and conversation of the Companions with the Prophet is through the light of the Prophethood of Ahmad (*Nübüvvet-i Ahmediyye*) as a Prophet (*Nebi*), whereas the saints' seeing the most noble Prophet (may God's peace and blessings be upon him) is a kind of companionship and conversation that takes place through

6. *Mektûbat*, 444.
7. *Mektûbat*, 445.

the light of the sainthood of Muhammad (may God's peace be upon him) (*velayet-i Ahmediyye*) after his death. In other words, the most noble Prophet's appearance to them and his manifestation in their visions is due to the sainthood of the Prophet (may God's peace be upon him), not because of the Prophethood itself. This being the case, however degree the Prophethood is superior to the sainthood, the companionship and conversation of the former should be equally superior to that of the latter too."[8]

Thus, according to Nursi, the superiority of the Prophet's companions to all saints rests on both the Prophet's unique office and His supreme personality. This becomes more pronounced in the succeeding lines of the above-quoted text.

Having thus established firmly and eloquently raison d'être and the significance of the Sufism in comparison with the Prophethood, Nursi now feels morally obliged to respond to the negative attitudes of certain people who always show hostility to the Sufi path. Among them, he targets mainly two groups: The first group consists of what he calls "certain devious sects" (*firak-i dalle*), who, due to their blindness to the illuminative lights of the Sufism, have gone as far as to its denial. In doing so, they have not only deprived themselves of this important path, but also caused others to be deprived. Yet, it is not this group with which Nursi is very much concerned, and for which he feels pity, since their denial of Sufism as a consequence of their blindness is to some extent understandable. However, what is at stake, or as he himself laments, "the most regrettable group" are certain people who belong exclusively to the Community of Orthodox Islam (*Ehl-i Sünnet ve'l-Cemaat*). Within this community, Nursi singles out two groups, one constitutes some literalist or externalist scholars (*zahiri ulema*), the other some ignorant politicians (*ehl-i siyaset ğafil*), both of them exert utmost attempt in order to close up and overthrow this important source of inspiration and water of life by means of such excuses that the followers of the Sufi path allegedly are abusive and mistaken in their practices of religion and that they hold views inconsistent with orthodox Islamic doctrines. At any rate, there are very few things, ways, and paths, which are immune to mistakes and faults; therefore, says Nursi, it would be unfair to judge a certain Sufi path on account of an error committed by its respective follower. Besides, such faults and misuses are mostly committed not by the Masters or full-fledged experienced disciples but by the uninitiated and incompetent novices of the *Tarikat*.[9] Therefore, the Sufi path cannot be condemned because of the evils and errors associated with the behaviors of certain orders and sects which have wrongly assumed the name of the *Tarikat*; in reality they remain far beyond the bounds of the Shari'a. So, what appears to be wrong in, lets us say, one particular *Tarikat*, cannot be generalized for the rest of the Sufi schools.

In the next step, Nursi moves on to examine the inner dimensions and the psychological stations of the Sufi path. At the very outset, he notes that to undertake a journey on the Sufi path is highly mysterious and fraught with difficulties.

8. Nursi, Bediüzzaman Said, *Sözler*, Istanbul, Envar Neşriyat 1991, 489.
9. *Mektûbat*, 445.

Because of its immense hardships, some of the people who travel on this path are sometimes drown, sometimes become harmful, and sometimes mislead others. Above all, it is a long, narrow, and very dangerous way.

At this juncture, Nursi, following strictly the conventional doctrines of the former Sufi Shaykhs, recapitulates the psychological journey (*suluk*) of a mystic on the Sufi path under two directions. The mystical journey, in Nursi's view, can be performed generally in two ways:

(i) *seyr-i enfusî* (vertical journey; "journey via the inner self"),

(i) *seyr-i âfâkî* (horizontal journey; "journey via the cosmos").

In the former way, the mystical journey starts from the soul or the self, and pulling away its gaze from the external reality, turns it exclusively to the heart. Here mystic destroys or breaks his egotism and opens up a way from his heart, and thus finds the reality. Afterwards, he turns back to the external world, which then looks to him luminous. After its completion, the reality that mystic sees in his inner world or self see it on large scale in outer world. This is, as Nursi says, the way of those who practice "inaudible celebration of God" (*zikr-i haft*). The very foundation of this method lies in the following triple formula: to break the egotism, renounce the worldly passions, and kill the rebellious soul (the evil-commanding soul).[10]

As to the latter way, i.e., horizontal journey, the mystic takes its departure of journey from the external world, and after beholding the manifestations of the Beautiful Divine Names there, he returns to his inner world, namely his heart, where he sees the illuminations of those manifestations on a small scale. At this stage, the heart becomes somehow the mirror of the *Samed* (Eternally Unfathomable One), so that the mystic arrives at the goal that he was longing for.

Having so far delineated Nursi's two necessary ways for the spiritual progress of the soul, we now proceed to determine his exact position towards Sufism within the scope of Islam. We immediately notice that Nursi assigns to Sufism a place of third rank after Qur'an and Sunna of the Prophet. Before entering Sufism or *Tasawwuf*, he declares, one first must safeguard himself or herself from the standpoint of Iman, which is the only way leading to the eternal bliss. So, according to him, if the great Sufi Masters, like Shaykh Abd al-Qadir Gilani (known as Gawth al-A'zam, the founder of the Qadiri Order, 470/1077-561/1166), Shah Naqshband (Muhammad Baha'u'd-Din Naqshband, the founder of the Naqshbandi Order d. 791/1389) and Imam Rabbani were today alive, they would exert all their efforts and works in order to reinforce and strengthen the truths of faith and the teachings of Islam. For they are the source of and the means to the eternal happiness. No one can enter Paradise without faith, whereas there are innumerable people who would go there without Sufism. In that case, Islam is like a bread, a basic sustenance, without which man cannot live, while Sufism is like a fruit with which man can dispense.[11] In olden days, one might

10. *Mektûbat*, 446.
11. *Mektûbat*, 23.

elevate himself so as to reach the truths of belief through a spiritual journey of forty days or even sometimes of forty years; but now, says Nursi, through God's mercy if we can find a way to attain those truths in forty minutes, we should not stay indifferent to it.[12] In another place where he was questioned if he had taught Sufism, he responded that "Islam is necessary, this is not the age of Sufism."[13] One could also cite in this context that, when he was accused of having instructed in Sufism and even of having founded a *tariqa*, his response was that he was always concerned with the truth and faith (*hakikat* and *iman*).[14]

Upon his reflection on the principle of the Naqshbandi Order that one must quit or renounce four things, the world, the Hereafter (*ukba*), existence (*hesti*), the very act of renunciation (*terk-i terk*), there occur to him these four things, which are later to form the fundamental stones of his own original Sufi doctrine vis-à-vis others, such as *vahdet-i vucud* and *vahdet-i şuhud*: absolute poverty (*fakr-i mutlak*), absolute inability (*acz-i mutlak*), absolute gratitude or gratefulness (*şükr-ü mutlak*), and absolute longing (*şevk-i mutlak*).[15]

According to Nursi, every true way sooner or later leads to God the Almighty; and all real and true ways, irrespective of their length and shortedness in leading to God, are ultimately derived from the Qur'an. This would mean that a path, so long as it draws its method and guidance from the Qur'an, is true and acceptable. As far as Nursi's own path is concerned, it is by all means based on the Qur'an, and is relatively shorter and safer than the others. His path consists of four progressive stages, beginning with that of inability (*acz*), then traversing through two intermediate stages of poverty (*fakr*) and compassion (*şefkat*), and culminating at last with that of contemplation (*tefekkür*). Each stage is also regarded by Nursi as an independent path leading to one particular aspect of God, for instance, inability leading to His all-encompassing Love, poverty to His overall-Mercy, compassion to His Compassion, and contemplation to His all-comprehensive Wisdom. This path with four stages differs, as Nursi indicates, from other Sufi paths, say, for instance, from the ones which are constituted of ten stages and characterized as the *silent paths* (*hafi tarikler*) on account of their performance of inaudible remembrance of God, and also from the ones consisting of seven stages and practicing instead audible remembrance and thus known as *vocal paths* (*cehri tarikler*). Because of its difference as such, Nursi considers it not a Sufi order but a reality and a sort of expression of the Shari'a, aiming essentially to show one's inability, poverty and faults before God.

Nursi's original path, as noted before, has its origin in the Qur'an, and advances steadily at four progressive steps; and each can be explained in brief as follows:

12. Ibid.
13. *Mektûbat*, 63.
14. His defence in court of Eskişehir would be enough to recall that he had no intention whatsoever for "training in Sufism (*tarikat*), but instruction in the direct way to reality (*hakikat.*)" Şükran Vahide, *The Author of the Risale-i Nur: Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, Istanbul, Sözler Publications 1992, 240.
15. *Mektûbat*, 20.

In the first step, the initiate is required to comprehend the verse, "*do not justify yourself*,"[16] with a sincere attempt to see himself as he is, and not higher than he is. For, as Bediuzzaman says, man, due to his innate nature and disposition, always tends to love and praise himself, and only himself, not anything else; so much so that he acts as if he is devoid of all faults and mistakes, and thus defends himself unreservedly as though worshipping himself, as the Qur'an articulates: "*Did you such a one who takes his god his own passion or his own vain desire?*"[17] So, his excessive glorification of himself causes him to rely only on himself and further sacrifice everything to his own soul at the exclusion of others. It is therefore the initiate, at the outset, must strive for the full discernment of his weakness.

In the second step, man is demanded to maintain the awareness of himself by persevering the awareness of God in mind and heart, as is displayed in the verse: "*And be not like those who forget God, and He therefore makes them forget their own selves.*"[18] In other words, man's forgetfulness of God, as Nursi expounds, results in his forgetfulness of his own soul, and even to some extent, his selfishness, in such a way that, whenever he sees something unfortunate or inconvenience, say, for instance, death, he takes it in relation to others, while forgetting that he may also encounter it too; and in the case of pleasure, however, he acts quite conversely and thinks first of himself. He can be liberated from such evil habit that emanates originally from his evil-commanding soul (*nefs-i emmare*) through the continuous recollection of God.

In the third step, the initiate begins to see his own imperfection before the most perfect Being, God. He strives to act in contrast to the demands of his evil-commanding soul by attributing all his good qualities to God and all his defects and faults to himself, as this verse teaches: "*Whatever good, (O man!) happens to you, (happens to you) from God; but whatever evil happens to you is from your (own) soul (from yourself).*"[19] At this stage, he remains ever thankful to God, and instead of being boastful of himself, he turns to lead an extremely humble life; so much so that, as Nursi articulates, he finds "his perfection to lie in imperfection, his ability in ability, and his wealth in poverty."[20]

The initiate completes his journey as soon as he attains to the thorough comprehension of the wisdom that lies in the following famous Qur'anic verse: "*Everything (that exists) will perish except His (own) Face (or Countenance).*"[21] The full understanding of this profound verse, according to Nursi, will save the person from being deluded by the appearance of the things, and thus facilitate him to see them in their true reality. In other words, a thing, declares he, has two

16. Qur'an, 52:32.
17. Qur'an, 25:43; 45:23.
18. Qur'an, 59:19.
19. Qur'an, 4:79.
20. *Mektûbat*, 460.
21. Qur'an, 28:88.
22. See for the similar division of the thing into two, based on the same Qur'anic verse, by Ghazali, *Mishkât al-Anwār*, ed. Abu'l-'Ala 'Afifi, Cairo, Dar al-Qawmiyya 1964, 55-6.

aspects, one in respect to itself (*mana-yi ismi*), the other in regard to its Creator (*mana-yi harfi*). In its first aspect, the thing is transient (*fani*), absent (*mefkud*), temporal (*hadis*), and nonexistent (*ma'dum*), whereas, in its second aspect, it is like a mirror, reflecting God's names; and in this sense, therefore, it becomes both a witness (*şahid*) and the witnessed (*maşhud*), and both an existent (*mevcud*) and the heedful of the existent (*vacid*).[22] A person at this stage will have completely given up his egotism, and thereby will be able to attribute all due existence to God, and then finally see that so long as he is a mirror of the manifestation of the true Donor of Existence, he procures an infinite existence.[23]

To sum up, the path designed and trodden by Nursi himself, as briefly outlined above, rests entirely on the Qur'an, and is relatively shorter, broader, safer and more universal than the other well-known Sufi paths. It is short, because it consists of merely four stages; again it is safer, since it paves no way for the ecstatic words (*şatahat*) and shocking utterances of the soul; and furthermore, the soul, being mindful of its incompetency, poverty and deficiency, may not trespass beyond its set-limit.[24]

The striking characteristic of Nursi's spiritual path, so far it appears to me, lies in the afore-mentioned division of a thing into two aspects, —which I may render roughly *phenomenal (mana-yi ismi)* and *existential* (*mana-yi harfi*). It is this division that brings Nursi's own Sufi path to a large extent closer to Ghazali's orthodox *tasawwuf* and yet distinguishes him, though by no means sharply, from Ibn Arabi's *vahdet-i vucud* (the Unity of Existence) as well as from his counter-part mystical thought, *vahdet-i şuhud* (the unity of witnessing), but not necessarily from his most-esteemed master, Ahmad Sirhindi, who is known as an adherent of the latter school of *Tasawwuf*.

A person who wants to advance through the spiritual journey of Nursi's Qur'anic-oriented Sufism is not required, as opposed to the school of *vahdet-i vucud*, to imagine the universe as sheer non-existence to the extent that he is compelled to proclaim that "there is no existent but He." Nor is he demanded to conjecture the universe as imprisoned in such utter oblivion that he cannot help saying that "there is nothing witnessed but He," which is the dictum of those who uphold the "unity of witnessing" (*vahdet-i şuhud*). Both of these views fall in conflict with the teaching of the Qur'an, according to which the universe is regarded as real, and not imaginary at all.[25] Or if we put it in the context of Nursi's own principle that a thing ought to be taken in its *existential sense*, we are inevitably driven to submit to the same fact as the Qur'an purports; that is,

22. See for the similar division of the thing into two, based on the same Qur'anic verse, by Ghazali, *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, ed. Abu'l-'Ala 'Afifi, Cairo, Dar al-Qawmiyya 1964, 55-6.

23. This idea may be traced back to Ibn 'Arabi, who regards man as "the very principle of the manifestation of God in the universe," and also proclaims very eloquently, as does Nursi here, that "man, the vice-regent of God, all-encompassing reality, is transient (*hādith*) is his form, and eternal (*azalī*) in his essence. (See for detail Idem, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, ed. Abu'l-'Ala 'Afifi, Beirut, Dar Kitab al-'Arabi,1946, 50 ff; for English translation, refer to *The Bezels of Wisdom*, trans. R. W. J. Austin, New York, Paulist Press 1980, 51 ff.

24. *Mektûbat*, 460.

25. *Mektûbat*, 461.

all that exists in the universe are real beings, functioning as mirrors, in the concrete sense, for the manifestations of God's Beautiful Names and Attributes.

Moreover, the unity of existence, according to Nursi, though it is considered to be the most sublime station (*en yüksek makam*) by its exponents, stands in fact in the lowest rank,[26] for it essentially reduces the beings to the level of mere imagination; and in so doing, it equally reduces all the manifestations of God's attributes and names to the level of shadow-like realities, which is contrary to the truth as held in the Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet (pbuh). That is to say, the Names of the Necessary Existent, such as all-Merciful (*Rahman*), Sustainer (*Rezzak*), Creator (*Hallâk*), etc., all necessitate in reality and actuality a true application and manifestation according to their respective function. All of these names are as real as the term existent. Besides, the Companions and eminent scholars as well as the Imams of the Prophet's family, Nursi proceeds, have reinforced this truth by unanimously declaring that "the true natures or realities of things are permanent (*haqa'iqu'l-ashya'i thabitatun*)" and that "God the Almighty manifests Himself truly through all His names."[27]

However, one must bear in mind, warns Nursi, that although all the beings in the universe indeed exist, yet their existence in relation to God is too weak, dark, and shadow; but they are neither imaginary nor fancy at all, simply because God bestows upon them existence through His name, 'Creator.'[28] Besides, God, who is absolutely and utterly beyond human comprehension, has nonetheless a relation to the beings, whether visible or invisible, as their Creator. The relationship between the Creator and His creatures, as far as Islam is concerned, rests on the six principles of belief each of which, as Nursi aptly puts it, requires the existence of contingent beings. These principles can in no way be built upon imagination or imaginary entities. Therefore, anyone who is engulfed with the unity of existence or witnessing, when he returns to the realm of sobriety (*âlem-i sahv*) from the realms of ecstasy (*istiğrak*) and intoxication (*sekr*), should abandon that state of unity; otherwise, he could act contrary to the reality.[29] Because of this reason, Nursi restores scrupulously the celebrated promulgation of *vahdat-i vucud*, *heme ost* (all is He) to its original form, *heme ezost* (all is from Him),[30] which may represent best the intimate relation between God and all other beings.

Nursi's assessment of *vahdat-i vucud* becomes more substantial in his interpretation of the visions of the Sufis who are immersed in the unity of Existence. *Vahdat-i vucud*, Nursi says, is no doubt a very important mystical path and state,

26. This is also the opinion of Ahmad Sirhindi, one of Nursi's spiritual masters, who, like the latter, is highly respectful of Ibn 'Arabi, but does criticize his doctrine of *vahdat-i vucud* in a vehement tone. Sirhindi, detaching himself from, for instance 'Ala'l-Dawla Simnani, the precursor of the doctrine of *vahdat-i şuhud*, who had explicitly denounced Ibn 'Arabi and his doctrine of *vahdat-i vucud*, has a mild judgement about him by saying that Ibn 'Arabi's statement, "everything is He," should be seen in the context of ecstatic expression, and therefore, he should never be blamed for it. See for a detailed account, J. G. J. der Haar, *Follower and Heir of the Prophet: Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624) as Mystic*, Leiden, Het Oosters Instituut 1992, 118-136.

27. *Mektûbat*, 85.

28. Ibid.

29. *Mektûbat*, 448-9.

30. *Mektûbat*, 84.

yet it is deficient and even sometimes perilous.[31] Despite this, most of the people who rose to that state did not want to leave it because of its attraction and pleasure;[32] on the contrary, assuming it to be the highest stage, they remained there for good.[33] These people, like other Sufis and saints, are the people of truth and reality; and they do witness the subtle realities especially in the state of ecstasy and intoxication. However, Nursi proceeds, so long as they remain in such a state, they cannot interpret what they see in their visions, unless they rise to the stage of the *Asfiya*, who are sober, having full control of themselves.[34]

Furthermore, Nursi expounds the difference between the two above-mentioned states with the example of two shepherds, one sleeping and other awake. The one who was awake interpreted the other's dream in a such way that it entirely corresponds to reality, because he, unlike the sleeping one, was able to dintiguish between the physical world and the world of images.[35] Similarly, the people of *vahdat-i vucud* may witness, in their state of ecstasy, so many subtle images from the world of Similitudes, which resembles the physical world. And when they return to the state of sobriety, they may declare and even write exactly what they witness in their former state. However, due to their lack of balance, they unconsciously intermingles the images of the spiritual world with the actual entities of the material world.

It is for this reason that the stages of "witnessing" (*şuhud*), Nursi declares, remains much inferior to that of faith in the Unseen. Strictly speaking, all the intuitions, illuminations and unveilings that occur to the people of "witnessing" are far behind the truths of belief of the sober saints and the true scholars who, as the heirs of the Prophet, rely on the Qur'an and Revelation. In short, all the mystical states, intuitions, visions, and illuminations, should be measured on the scale of the Qur'an and Sunna.

Finally, we can conclude that Nursi's own conception Sufism in general and his assessment of *vahdat-i vucud* in particular are highly novel and inspired by the spirit of the Qur'an and conceptualized in the context of his Sufi forerunners, like Ahmad Sirhindi. However, since his major aim was not to construct a Sufi

31. *Mektûbat*, 449.

32. The people of *vahdat-i vucud* desire to remain in their ecstatic state, because, for them, as Nursi notes, this is the ultimate state. In other words, this implies that they love their state (*hal*) rather than God. One would compare this with Jalal al-Din Rumi's following couplet: "You are in love with your state, you are not in love with Me; you are attached to Me in the hope of (experiencing) the state." (*The Mathnawi of Jalalu'ddin Rumi*, trans. Reynold A. Nicholson, Cambridge: University Press 1982, vi, 80; *Mesnevi*, iii, 1428).

33. *Mektûbat*, 83.

34. The term *asfiya'* literally means the purified people; however, in the present context, it is most likely used to denote the Sufis who prefer the state of sobriety (*sahv*) to that of intoxication (*sukr*). One can cite as examples Hallaj (d. 922) and Abu Yazid al-Bistami (d. 874) for the latter and Junayd al-Baghdadi (d. 910) for the former. In one of the anecdotes narrated by al-Hujwiri in his *Kashf al-Mahjûb* we find speaking to Hallaj: "You are in error concerning sobriety and intoxication. The former denotes soundness of one's spiritual state in relation to God, while the latter denotes excess of longing and extremity of love, and neither of them can be acquired by human effort..." (Idem., *Kashf al-Mahjub: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism*, trans. Reynold Nicholson, New Delhi: Taj Printers 1982, 189).

35. See for full coverage of the shepherd story, *Mektûbat*, 81-2.

theory on his own, as did the latter, his ideas seem to have been dispersed here and there throughout his works with not such a thoroughness and elaboration that we are accustomed to see in other Sufi writers. In spite of such a minor drawback, his originality, especially in determining the exact place of the Sufi paths on the touchstone of the Qur'an and Sunna, as well as in assigning a real status to all other beings, aside God, in terms of existence, deserves to be mentioned with due appreciation.

* * *

The Concepts of Supplication and Worship in the Risale-i Nur

Osman Cilacı

The dictionary meaning of *dua* (Ar. *du'ā'*) is supplication to or invocation of God, to call or summon, and to call upon, while that of *ubudiyet* (Ar. *'ubūdīya*) is worship, slavery, servitude, and excessive attachment to someone.[1] Supplication is for man to speak with God in his heart, and to seek His grace and succour. Worship is an endless path of conversation leading to God. The five daily prayers are a relation man forms directly with God. Supplication is man reaching the level of addressing his Sustainer in the face of some out of the ordinary event.[2] Man, who was created to worship God, cannot always prevent himself from sinning. He has therefore sometimes to entreat his Creator, repent for his sins, and seek forgiveness for them.[3]

Supplication is a form of worship which ensures that Muslims develop sound characters.[4] One who from a young age repeats verbally and sincerely the

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Kur'an Işığında Üç Peygamber Üç Kitab (1976); *İlahi Dinlerde Oruç, Hac, ve Kurban* (1980); *Psiko-Sosyal Açıdan İlahi Dinlerde Dualar* (1980); *Hıristiyanlık Propagandası ve Misyonerlik Faaliyetleri* (1982); Muhammad Qutb, *Barnaba İncili* (trans., 1988); Abdurrahman Aygün, *Barnaba İncili* (from Ottoman Turkish, 1989); *Dinler ve İnsanlar* (1990); *Genel Hatlarıyla Dinler Tarihi* (1994); *Günümüz Dünya Dinleri* (1995).

1. Develioğlu, Ferid, *Osmanlıca-Türkçe Lugat*, Ankara 1971.
2. Izutsu, Toshihiko, *Kur'an'da Allah ve İnsan* [Turk. trans: S. Ateş], Ankara 1975, 9.
3. al-Nawawī, Muḥyiddīn, *al-Adhkār*, Cairo 1952; al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-Tawwābīn*, Beirut 1986.
4. Olgun, Tahiru'l-Mevlevi, *Müslümanlık'ta İbadet Tarihi*, Istanbul 1963, 79.

prayer: "My belief is so strong I bow before no one but You. You are my God, You created me," will develop a firm character; it will permit him to bow before no one but God.

In God's eyes, supplication is a measure of His servant's worth:

Say: No weight or value would my Sustainer attach to you were it not for your prayer![5] He corroborates this in other verses: *I created jinns and men only that they should worship Me.*[6] * *And your Sustainer says: Call on Me; I will answer you. But those who are too arrogant to serve Me will surely find themselves in Hell, in humiliation!*[7]

Our Sustainer wants us always to call upon Him, and has said He will accept our prayers if they are sincere. God's Messenger (PBUH) also stressed this, saying: "There is nothing more valuable in the sight of God than prayer."[8] No supplication made to God will remain without recompense.[9] Similarly, supplication is the believer's sword.[10]

Supplication's effect on the spirit and the body is in accordance with its quality and frequency, and it is a well-known fact that it also strengthens the sense of the sacred and the moral sense. While the peace of mind it brings assists in the curing of illness.[11]

Supplication and worship are the chief factors distinguishing man from the animals. Supplication leads to a more plentiful livelihood, increased health, and an active life, as well as preventing calamities.[12] The nature of supplication, which holds an important place in life, can be known only through experience, it is difficult to describe it in writing.

At no time in its history has humanity not felt the need to offer supplication. What it means is once again entering His presence for a moment, and forgetting ourselves.[13]

Three of the four Divine revealed books other than the Qur'an, call on men to supplicate God. Primitive tribespeople, even, try to express their feelings through various sorts of invocations and dances.

The great sufi figures of Islam had their own original supplications and entreaties. One should understand and experience the sincerity of the prayer of Rabi'a Khatun which begins: "O my Lord! If I worship You out of fear of Hell, burn me in it!"[14]

4. Olgun, Tahiru'l-Mevlevi, *Müslümanlık'ta İbadet Tarihi*, Istanbul 1963, 79.
5. Qur'an, 25:77; *Bukhārī*, Īmān, 2. Here Bukhari states that supplication also has the meaning of 'belief' (*īmān*), and interprets the verse as meaning "... No value would my Sustainer attach to you were it not for your belief."
6. Qur'an, 51:56.
7. Qur'an, 40:60.
8. *Tirmidhī*, Da'wāt, No: 3370.
9. "Call on Me, I will answer you." Qur'an: 40:60.
10. *Kashf al-Khafā'*, i, 485.
11. Carrel, Alexis, *Dua* [Turk. trans: M. Alper Yücetürk], Istanbul 1962, 20.
12. Sofuoğlu, M. Cemal, *Açıklama Dua Kitabı*, Ankara 1992, 22.
13. Fenelon, *Kızların Eğitimi* [Turk. trans: B. Fırtına, İ. Öztürk], Istanbul 1967, 74.
14. Sunar, Cavid, *Ana Hatlarıyla İslâm Tasavvufu Tarihi*, Ankara 1978, 17.

Recitations and litanies of the Divine Names should be considered another form of supplication.[15]

Supplication and worship are two inseparable concepts. In its true meaning, supplication is the most effective means of presenting our wishes to God, and is a means of performing the duty of worshipping of God and expressing one's servitude to Him. The latter is carried out through worship.

Worship differs from religion to religion, and is performed by the followers of each according to their own conditions and particular rules. In all religions, there are pious; ascetic people who are not content with merely doing the minimum.

Worship and expressing one's servitude to God are innate to man, and strengthen his heart and belief. They are a sign of maturity, leading to moral improvement and the refinement of thought.[16] Supplication and worship ensure that man leads a happy, contented life, allowing him to perceive the nobility of humanity. They make him admit to his impotence and are the peak of his duties of worship before God.

First and foremost, Bediuzzaman (1876-1960) dedicated his life to saving religious belief, and in his works dealt extensively with the questions of supplication and worship, in addition to various problems to do with belief and Islam. In his view, a person can be saved from being the slave of his instinctual soul to the extent he perceives he is a servant of God. This begins with supplication and is perfected through worship.

In the struggle Bediuzzaman undertook to strengthen belief and make the whole of society identify with Islam, he took every precaution throughout his life against exceeding the limits and allowing politics to become the centre of his struggle. He stressed that salvation was only to be found in adhering closely to the Qur'an.

Despite spending long years in prison, Said Nursi never ceased to write and disseminate the Risale-i Nur. It was following his life as a recluse with a few of his students on Mount Erek near Van (1923-5), that he began his life of true ordeal.[17] He dedicated his life to instilling faith and the truths of belief in people's hearts, never hesitating to sacrifice himself for his people and country.[18] Another of his distinguishing characteristics was that he never wished ill to those who persecuted and wronged him.

> "Bediuzzaman said 'By nature I cannot endure to be insulted and abased.' But what a shame it is that the service of the Qur'an and belief which he undertook with sincerity and continued wholeheartedly till the end of his life was misunderstood by some writers. Things were published which described his struggle as working for a political school of thought or a different religious movement."[19]

15. Cilacı, Osman, *İlahi Dinlerde Dualar*, Konya 1982, 24 ff.
16. For more detail, see, Yıldırım, Suad, *Kur'an'da Uluhiyet*, İstanbul 1987.
17. Kara, İsmail, *Türkiye'de İslâmcılık Düşüncesi*, Istanbul 1987, ii, 314.
18. Eşref Edib, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursî, Hayatı, Eserleri, Mesleği*, Istanbul 1952; Şahiner, Necmeddin, *Bilinmeyen Taraflarıyla Bediüzzaman Said Nursî*, Istanbul 1979; Kutay, Cemal, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursî*, Istanbul 1980.
19. Çağatay, Neşet, *Türkiye'de Gerici Eylemler*, Ankara 1972; Armaner, Neda, *İslâm Dini'nden Ayrılan Cereyanlar, Nurculuk*, Ankara 1964.

Bediuzzaman's one hundred and thirty works are read not only in Turkey, but all over the world. They have been translated into Arabic, English, German, French, Urdu, and other languages.[20] They have been the subject of academic studies and research (Ph.D. and M.A. theses). The Risale-i Nur's being published in recent years with additional indexes, glossaries, and printed on quality paper according to the latest techniques have led to their being profited from to an even greater extent. Another matter that should be considered is that besides employing these techniques to a greater extent for Turkish editions,[21] the very detailed headings such as (*Point, In Short, Addendum,* etc.) should be reduced to the minimum.

Bediuzzaman believed that Islam should be explained to modern man suitably to the understanding of the age, in logical manner, and that primarily the vacuum left by loss of religious belief should be filled. He made the Qur'an the basis of all his works. One may see them as a commentary on the Qur'an's meaning. Said Nursi was born around the same time as Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, and like him was not deceived by the West's deceptive and brilliant outer face, and saw the necessity of exposing the inner face of Western civilization.

The chief aim of the Risale-i Nur being to expound the truths of belief, it played an important role in the renewal of the faith of believers. No zig-zags are to be observed in the thought of Said Nursi, who lived for nearly a century, despite the age being one of vast revolutions and upheavals, not only in Turkey, but throughout the world of humanity. In this respect, the Risale-i Nur is "not supposition, it is affirmation; it is not submission, it is belief; it is not intuitive knowledge, it is a testifying and witnessing; it is not imitating, it is verification."[22] In his view, the greatest calamity facing manking this age was weakness of religious belief, and its result, a superficial Islamic perception. A generation had to be raised that would not bow to the people of misguidance, would know how to act, and would gain the world, yet give it no place in its heart.

Almost seventy years have passed since the Risale-i Nur was written. Compared to that time there is a great increase in its readers, those interested in it, and those who research it, both in this country and abroad, and every passing day this further increases. One of the points attracting this attention is that generally Muslims do not give precedence to their duties in order of importance, and consider the dissemination of the truths of belief in second or even third place.[23]

Bediuzzaman said that so long as success is not achieved in the struggle against its three main enemies, ignorance, conflict, and poverty, the Islamic world could not truly produce what is expected from it.[24]

20. Aşur, Hüseyin, İslâm Dünyasının 20. Asırda Yeniden Yapılanması ve Bediüzzaman Said Nursî (International Symposium), Istanbul 1992.
21. Bediuzzaman himself pointed out the importance of this with the words: "Divine Determining gave me little Turkish; in fact, it did not give me any; so assist me with your attention!" (*Volkan* No: 83, 24/3/1909).
22. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Sikke-i Tasdik-i Gaybî*, 239.
23. Akgündüz, Ahmed, *İslâm Dünyasında Kimlik Problemi ve Bediüzzaman Said Nursî* (Symposium paper), Istanbul 1992, 92.
24. For more details, see, Şahiner, Necmeddin, *Said Nursî ve Nurculuk Hakkında Aydınlar Konuşuyor*, Istanbul 1977.

Bediuzzaman explained with evidence based on both the Qur'an and Sunna, and reason numerous historical matters, but it was man he gave most importance to, wanting to perfect his belief and thought.[25] In this respect, a person should admit his impotence and hold fast to supplication and worship. It will be seen that supplication and worship are mentioned in almost every part of the nearly six-thousand-page Risale-i Nur Collection.

In this paper, I shall attempt to discuss from various angles the parts that deal directly with supplication and worship, rather than those in which it is a subsidiary subject.

When studied in detail, it is seen that supplication is discussed in detail in *Sözler* (The Words), *Mektûbat* (Letters), and *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, and worship and the expression of one's servitude to God are dealt with in The Words and The Flashes Collection.[26] Supplication as dealt with in the Risale-i Nur may be set out under these headings:

i. The reason for the world's creation.
ii. Almighty God's desire for us to entreat Him.
iii. Bediuzzaman supplicating God, but never cursing others.
iv. Innovations may be avoided through prayer.
v. All the beings in the universe offer supplication.
vi. The blessings and pleanty resulting from supplication; how it should be offered; its being a spiritual cure; its effects.
vii. Supplication being the result of sincere belief.
viii. Active and verbal supplication.
ix. The supplications of Jonah, Job, God's Messenger (PBUH), 'Ali, and 'Uways al-Qarani.
x. Belief necessitates supplication.
xi. The source of supplication and supplications of the sick.
xii. Prayers for rain and their results.
xiii. Conditions for the acceptance of general supplications.
xiv. Man's essential duty being belief and supplication.
xv. All supplications not being accepted.
xvi. Illness and this necessitating prayer.

Similarly, when the concepts of worship, and the expression of one's servitude to God are investigated in the Risale-i Nur, it is seen that the following subjects are discussed:

i. Nothing apart from God is sufficiently great to be worshipped.
ii. Happiness in this world and the next is obtained through worship.
iii. All the beings in the universe worship God.
iv. The relations between illness and worship and reflective thought and worship.
v. The importance and benefits of worship.

25. "If Hz. Mevlana had come at this time, he would have written the Risale-i Nur, and if I had come at his time, I would have written the Mathnawi. At that time, service [to religion] was of that sort, now it is this." (Bediuzzaman Said Nursi)
26. For details, see, Mutlu, İsmail, *Risale-i Nur Külliyatı Fihrist ve İndeksi*, İstanbul 1994.

vi. Men and jinns being created in order to worship God.
vii. The meaning and conditions of worship, and competition not being acceptable.
viii. Personal development and attainment being possible through worship, and the necessity of the heart, mind, and imagination being preoccupied with worship.
ix. Reading the Qur'an being a form of worship.
x. The five daily prayers being the index of all worship.
xi. Fear of God (*taqwa*) being the most perfect worship.
xii. Knowing that the basis of worship is man's impotence, poverty, fault, and deficiency.
xiii. Worship necessitating not 'testing' God, but submission to Him.

Having noted the main topics related to supplication and worship, we may now see in detail from The Words (*Sözler*) how they are dealt with in the Risale-i Nur, and how they are explained and illustrated.

Bediuzzaman heads his discussion of supplication in this work[27] with the verse, *Say: No weight or value would my Sustainer attach to you were it not for your prayer!*,[28] and having attracted the reader's attention with the statement:

"Belief necessitates supplication as a certain means of securing needs, and just as human nature has an intense desire for it, so Almighty God decrees, *Say, 'My Sustainer would not concern Himself with you but for your supplication,'*" he immediately establishes the subject with the verse: "*Call upon Me and I will answer you.*"[29]

As is well-known, before anything his works expound the Qur'an, and he employs comparison and allegory in order to facilitate understanding of the subjects. "The Risale-i Nur is a bunch of roses gathered from the world-embracing garden of the Qur'an."[30]

Another noteworthy point in the Risale-i Nur is that in some places subjects are explained in question and answer form, and in others, parts that have previously been written in summary fashion are explained in detail. Bediuzzaman employed the same method for supplication. He approached it with the question:

> "***If you say:*** 'We frequently offer supplications, but they are not accepted. But the verse is general, it states that every supplication is answered.'
>
> "***The Answer:*** To answer is one thing, to accept is something quite different. Every supplication is answered, but its being accepted and exactly what was sought being given is dependent on Almighty God's wisdom. For example, if a sick child calls the doctor, saying: 'Doctor! Doctor!', and he replies: 'Here I am, what do you want?', and the child says: 'Give me that medicine!', the doctor will either give him exactly what he asks for or something better and more beneficial for him. Or knowing that it is harmful for his illness, he will give him nothing.

27. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Sözler*, Istanbul, Envar Neşriyat 1996, 317-8 / *The Words* [Eng. trans: Şükran Vahide], Istanbul, Sözler Publications 1993, 325-7.
28. Qur'an, 25:77.
29. Qur'an, 40:60.
30. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Asâ-yı Mûsa*, 256.

"Thus, since Almighty God is all-present and all-seeing, He responds to the supplications of His servants. Through His presence and response, He transforms the desolation of loneliness and solitude into familiarity."[31]

According to Bediuzzaman, supplication is a form of worship and recognition of man's servitude to God, and the fruits of this look to the hereafter. Worldly aims are merely the times of supplications and worship of that sort. To explain the matter further, in the same piece he says:

"For example, the prayers and supplications for rain are a form of worship. Drought is the time for such worship. Worship and supplications of this sort are not in order to bring rain. If they are performed with that intention alone they are not worthy of acceptance, for they are not sincere worship...

"That is to say, supplication has the meaning of worship and man's acknowledging his servitude to God. As for worship and servitude to God, it should be purely and sincerely for God's sake. Man should only proclaim his impotence and seek refuge with Him through supplication, he should not interfere in His dominicality. He should leave the taking of measures to Him and rely on His wisdom. He should not accuse His Mercy."

As is clearly understood, here Bediuzzaman first explains supplication, and man's duty, then states the relation between supplication and worship.

Expounding the verse mentioned above, Bediuzzaman says that all the beings in the universe are seeking things from Almighty God, each in it own tongue: "All beings utter the glorifications particular to them, and perform their own worship, and prostrate in the way particular to them; similarly what rises to the Divine Court from all the universe is supplication." He reaches the conclusion that "through their tongues of disposition they make certain requests of the Absolutely Munificent One for the continuance of their lives, which are a sort of sustenance for them." Bediuzzaman says that the fourth sort of supplication is that offered by us, and it is of two kinds: "one is active and through disposition, and the other, verbal and with the heart."

"For example, having recourse to causes is an active prayer. To gather together causes is not in order to create the effect, but through the tongue of disposition to take up an acceptable position in order to seek the effect from Almighty God. ... The second sort is to offer supplication with the tongue and the heart. It is to seek certain wishes which the hand cannot reach."

Following these succinct explanations, Bediuzzaman concludes his discussion of supplication in The Words with the following sentences:

"And so, O impotent, needy man! Do not neglect a means like supplication, which is the key to the treasury of mercy and to an inexhaustible strength. Cling to it! Rise to the highest peaks of humanity! Include in your supplications those of all the universe, like a king! Say, *From You alone do we seek help,*[32] like a servant and deputy representing all the universe! Be on the Most Excellent Pattern of creation!"

In *Letters,* Bediuzzaman expresses the question of supplication with the question: "What is the best way believers can pray for one another?" And he replies:

31. *Sözler*, 317 / *The Words*, 325.
32. Qur'an, 1:5.

"It has to be within the sphere of what is acceptable, for supplications become acceptable under certain conditions; their acceptability increases as these conditions are fulfilled. For instance, when supplications are to be made, a person should be purified spiritually by seeking forgiveness; then he should recite benefictions for the Prophet (PBUH) (*salawat*), an acceptable prayer, for intercession; and following his supplication, he should again recite the *salawat.*"[33]

It says in a verse, *O our Sustainer! Give us good in this world and good in the hereafter, and defend us from the torment of the Fire.*[34]

Said Nursi says

"General supplications like these which are offered sincerely, and with humility and tranquillity of heart; and following the five daily prayers, and the morning prayer in particular; and in holy places, and mosques in particular; and on Friday, and particularly during 'the hour when prayers are answered;' and during the three months of Rajab, Sha'ban, and Ramadan, and on the well-known holy nights, such as the Prophet's birthday and Ragha'ib, and on the Night of Power in particular—it is to be strongly hoped from Divine mercy that such supplications will be accepted."[35]

Thus, he sets out concisely the conduct for offering supplications, the conditions for their acceptance, their times, that they should be preceded by seeking forgiveness, the particular times they are more acceptable, the places, the advantages of praying on holy nights, and the effulgence of supplications comprising Qur'anic verses and Hadiths.

Bediuzzaman also expounds the verse: *Say: No weight or value would my Sustainer attach to you were it not for your prayer!,*[36] expounded in the Fifth Point, of the First Chapter of the Twenty-Third Word, in Five Points in the First Addendum of the Twenty-Fourth Letter. As follows:

"*First Point:* Supplication is a mighty mystery of worship; indeed, it is like the spirit of worship. As we have mentioned in many places, supplication is of three kinds."

1. The tongue of latent ability; the gathering together of causes is a supplication for the creation of the effect.

2. The tongue of innate need; it is a sort of supplication made by all living creatures to the All-Compassionate Creator to give them the things they need and desire, which are beyond their power and will.

3. The supplication of conscious beings arising from need. It is of two kinds. If it is made with the tongue of a pure, sincere heart, it is virtually always acceptable. The second kind is the well-known supplication and it too is of two kinds. One is by action and the other by word. For example, ploughing is a supplication by action.

"*Second Point:* The effect of supplication is great. Especially if the supplication gains universality and persists, it almost always has a result, indeed, its result is

33. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Mektûbat*, Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1981, 258 / *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Letters, 1928-1932* [English trans.], Sözler Publications 1994, 330-1.
34. Qur'an, 2:201.
35. *Mektûbat*, 258 / *Letters*, 331.
36. Qur'an, 25:77.

continuous. ... That is to say, the Creator of the World knew that in the future Muhammad (PBUH) would ask for eternal happiness and for a manifestation of the Divine Names in the name of mankind, indeed, on account of all beings, and He accepted that future supplicaton and created the universe. ... O Muslims! The intercessor you shall have on the Day of Resurrection is thus; in order to attract the intercession of this intercessor towards yourselves, follow his Practices!...

"*Third Point:* There are two ways in which voluntary supplication by word is acceptable. It is either accepted exactly as desired or what is better is granted. For example, someone asks for a son, and Almighty God gives a daughter like Mary. It may not be said: 'His supplication was not accepted,' but that 'It was accepted in a better form.' Also, sometimes a person makes supplication for his own happiness in this world, and it is accepted for the hereafter. It may not be said:'His supplication was rejected," but that "It was accepted in a more beneficial form.' Likewise, since Almighty God is All-Wise, we seek from Him and He responds to us. But He deals with us according to His wisdom. A sick person... asks for honey and the expert doctor gives him quinine, he may not say: 'The doctor did not listen to me.' Rather, the doctor listened to his sighs and moans; he heard them and responded to them. He provided better than what was asked for.

"*Fourth Point:* The best, finest, sweetest, most immediate fruit and result of supplication is this, that the person who offers it knows there is someone who listens to his voice, sends a remedy for his ailment, takes pity on him, and whose hand of power reaches everything. He is not alone in this great hostel of the world; there is an All-Generous One Who looks after him and makes it friendly. Imagining himself in the presence of the One Who can bring about all his needs and repulse all his innumerable enemies, he feels a joy and relief; he casts off a load as heavy as the world, and exclaims: 'All praise be to God, the Sustainer of All the Worlds!'[37]

"*Fifth Point:* Supplication is the spirit of worship and the result of sincere belief. For one who makes supplication shows through it that there is someone who rules the whole universe; One Who knows the most insignificant things about me, can bring about my most distant aims. ... listen to the decree of, *And your Sustainer says: Call on Me; I shall answer you.*[38] As the saying goes: 'If I had not wanted to give, I would not have given wanting.'"

It is seen that explained in these five points, the concepts of supplication and worship follow a harmonious, logical line. Here, it is stressed in particular that supplication and worship are great mysteries, and that supplication is very effective, and that the reason for the world's creation should be sought in supplication.

The most convincing answers are to be found here[39] to the complaints sometimes heard from people: "I prayed but it wasn't accepted." Examples are given and it is made comprehensible to everyone. The matter discussed here (in the Third Point) is summarized in the sentence "We request things from Almighty God and He responds in accordance with His wisdom." With the example, "A sick person asks for honey, and the expert doctor gives him quinine because he has malaria," the matter becomes completely clear.

37. Qur'an, 1:2.
38. Qur'an, 40:60.
39. *Mektûbat*, 291 / *Letters*, 355-6.

According to Bediuzzaman, "the best, finest, and sweetest fruit of supplication" is there being "someone who listens." Again, supplication is a result of sincere belief. Sincere belief demands supplication, and supplication demands sincere belief. In particular I want to draw attention to Bediuzzaman's question:

"Also, is it at all possible that eternal happiness, which all the believers have asked for at all times, continuously, with complete sincerity and yearning and entreaty, should not be given to them, and that the Absolutely Generous One, the Absolutely Compassionate One, Who according to the testimony of all the universe possesses boundless mercy, should not accept their supplications and that eternal happiness should not exist?"[40]

It is understood with complete clarity that the believer will offer supplications constantly and persistently, and will await absolute acceptance only from the Munificent Creator.

In another work,[41] with the sentence,

"Supplications are samples of the mysteries of the affirmation of Divine unity and worship; one who offers supplications should say 'Almighty God hears the faintest desires and wishes that occur to me,' and should believe that He is All-Powerful,"

Bediuzzaman examines supplication from another angle and draws attention to its forming an example of the mysteries of the affirmation of Divine unity and of worship. Following the above, he says that supplication is the only way of presenting our desires and wishes to Almighty God. In another place in the same work,[42] he expounds the verse, *Call upon Me and I will answer you*[43] in this way:

"Do not say that some supplications are not answered, for supplication is a form of worship, and the fruits of worship will be seen in the hereafter. Worldly purposes, like the times of the obligatory five daily prayers, are the times for supplications and worship, they are not the fruits. Just as being afflicted by oppressors and the visitation of calamities mark the times of particular supplications."

Some people expect an immediate positive manifestation from Almighty God as soon as they offer their requests. If there is a short delay in its being granted, they start complaining, "I keep on praying but I can't get what I want." They even tell others that they are going to give up offering supplications. The above is the Risale-i Nur's logical, scholarly, and convincing answer to people who think in that way. Those who study these questions and answers both deliver their belief from doubts and find peace of mind.

In another place in the *Mesnevi-i Nuriye* (page 200), supplication is put into three categories:

1. Man's verbal supplications.

2. Supplications made through the tongue of need, offered by plants and trees particularly in the spring.

40. *Mektûbat*, 291 / *Letters*, 355-6.
41. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, 74.
42. *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, 190.
43. Qur'an, 40:60.

3. Supplications made through the tongue of latent ability by things capable of change and being perfected. Just as all things glorify God in their own tongue, so they supplicate Him through their needs and latent abilities.

Here it is being explained, as it was above, that all the beings in the universe entreat and supplicate Almighty God, each in its own way. Sometimes attention is indirectly drawn to Qur'anic verses without clear reference to them.

In The Flashes Collection (*Lem'alar*) (page 179-80), Bediuzzaman writes:

> "Worship and expression of one's servitude of God look to the Divine command and Divine pleasure. The reason for worship is the Divine command and its result is Divine pleasure. The fruits and benefits look to the hereafter. But so long as they are not the ultimate reason and not intentionally sought, benefits looking to this world and fruits which come about themselves and are given, are not contrary to worship."

Recognition of one's servitude to God hold an important place in Islam,[44] and it is considered to be a sign of a person's closeness to God. The person wins the love of the Absolutely Powerful One to the degree he sincerely and consistently performs his worship. Bediuzzaman lays emphasis on this important point in almost all his works in the appropriate contexts. The following is another example:

> "And so, those who do not understand this mystery, recite for example the *Awrad-i Qudsiya-i Shah Naqshband*, which yields a hundred benefits and merits, or *Jawshan al-Kabir*, which yields a thousand, making some of those benefits their prime intention. Then they do not receive the benefits, and shall not receive them, and do not have the right to receive them. For the benefits may not be the reason for the invocation and may not themselves be intended and sought. For they are obtained when unsought for, as a consequence of the sincere invocation, as a favour. If they are intended, it damages the sincerity to an extent. Indeed, it ceases being worship and looses all value."[45]

According to Bediuzzaman,

> "...Knowing their impotence, poverty, faults, and defects, and prostrating entreatingly before the Divine Court, which form the basis of worship ... the only means of salvation and deliverance is sincerity. It is of the greatest importance to gain sincerity. The tiniest act performed with sincerity is preferable to tons of those performed without sincerity."[46]

We may say that the matter which he stresses most in all his works is sincerity. It is a fact that no positive result can be obtained without sincerity. Bediuzzaman explains that for worship to be performed completely and in the full meaning, sincerity is of the utmost importance. He describes another basic factor of worship as follows:

> "In worship there is only submission, not testing. For a master may test his slave... similarly man may not test his Sustainer."[47]

44. Qur'an, 2:21: "O people! Worship...!"
45. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Lem'alar*, Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1986, 127 / *The Flashes Collection* [Eng. trans.], Sözler Publications 1995, 180.
46. *Lem'alar*, 128 / *The Flashes Collection*, 181.
47. *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, 126.

Bediuzzaman says also that

> "Just as worship is the means of obtaining happiness in this world and the next, so it is the means of setting in order the matters of this world and that world, and is the means too to personal perfections and attainment and to those of all humanity. It is a most elevated relation and honourable bond between God and His servants."[48]

Stating that someone with sincerity may approach his Creator through worship, and that he may gain His pleasure in this way, Bediuzzaman then says:

> "O soul! As we have stated repeatedly, since man is the fruit of the tree of creation, he is a creature which, like a fruit, is the furthest and most comprehensive and looks to everything ... and the world. As for worship, it is a line of union which turns his face from transience to permanence, from creation to Creator, from multiplicity to unity, and from the extremity to the source, or it is a point of union between the source and the extremity."[49]

The Risale-i Nur studies the relation between life and the universe from various angles, and pointing out the necessity of recognizing the complementary nature of the two concepts, summarizes the connection between them and the two forms of worship, as follows:

> "... Just as the result of the universe is life, so are thanks and worship the result of life, and the cause and ultimate reason for the universe's creation, and its desired result. Yes, the Ever-Living Self-Subsistent Maker of the universe certainly wants thanks from living creatures in return for His making Himself known and loved through so many boundless sorts of bounties, and He wants their praise and laudation in return for His precious arts, and for them to respond with worship and obedience to His dominical commands."[50]

In explanation of the verse, *Do you not see that to God bow down in worship all things that are in the heavens and on earth*,[51] Bediuzzaman says:

> "The All-Wise Qur'an states clearly that everything, from the heavens to the earth, from the stars to flies, from angels to fishes, and from planets to particles, prostrates, worships, praises and glorifies Almighty God. But their worship varies according to their capacities and the Divine Names that they manifest; it is all different."[52]

Another noteworthy example of supplication is that of Job (Upon whom be peace). Expounding the verse, *When he called upon his Sustainer saying: Verily harm has afflicted me, and You are the Most Merciful of the Merciful*,[53] Bediuzzaman writes:

> "While afflicted with numerous wounds and sores for a long time, he recalled the great recompense to be had for his sickness, and endured it with utmost patience. But later, when the worms generated by his wounds penetrated to his heart and his tongue, the seat of the remembrance and knowledge of God, he feared that his duty

48. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Işârâtü'l-İ'caz*, 140.
49. *Sözler*, 336 / *The Words*, 373.
50. *Lem'alar*, 315 / *The Flashes Collection*, 430.
51. Qur'an, 22:18.
52. *Sözler*, 326 / *The Words*, 361.
53. Qur'an, 21:83.

of worship would suffer, and so he said in supplication not for the sake of his own comfort, but for the sake of his worship of God: 'O Lord! Harm has afflicted me; my remembrance of You with my tongue and my worship of You with my heart will suffer.' God Almighty then accepted this pure sincere, disinterested and devout supplication in the most miraculous fashion."[54]

Having concisely expounded the verse about Job's supplication, Said Nursi moves on to the situation in our society. This is his conclusion:

"Corresponding to the outer wounds and sicknesses of Job (Upon whom be peace), we have inner sicknesses of the spirit and heart. If our inner being was to be turned outward, and our outer being turned inward, we would appear more wounded and diseased than Job. For each sin that we commit and each doubt that enters our mind, inflicts wounds on our heart and our spirit."[55]

Bediuzzaman diagnoses the sicknesses afflicting our society with the above eloquent lines; is it possible to remain unmoved in the face of his profound thoughts. Can any believer consider he has no need of taking a lesson from these satisfying, logical explanations with their spiritual and social aspects?

I said that Said Nursi provides logical, spiritual, convincing and persuasive explanations for numerous verses and Hadiths. One of these is the verse, *There is no god other than You, Glory be unto You! Indeed I was among the wrongdoers.*[56] Having been swallowed by a whale, Jonah's uttered "a most powerful supplication," which is "a most effective means for obtaining answer to prayer."

"In that situation all causes were suspended, for Jonah needed to save him one whose command should constrain the whale and the sea, and the night and the sky. The night, the sea, and the whale were united against him. Only one whose command might subdue all three of these could bring him forth on the strand of salvation."

Having expounded the verse, Bediuzzaman again turns to the woeful situation of our society, and in the manner of a sociologist, depicts this instructive tableau for us:

"Now we are in a situation one hundred times more awesome than that in which Jonah (Upon whom be peace) first found himself. Our night is the future. When we look upon our future with the eye of neglect, it is a hundred times darker and more fearful than his night. ... This being our true state, we should in imitation of Jonah (Upon whom be peace) avert ourselves from all causes and take refuge directly in the Causer of Causes, that is, our Sustainer. We should say: *There is no god but You, Glory be unto You! Indeed I was among the wrongdoers...* This being the case, considering that as a result of his supplication, the whale became for Jonah a vehicle, or a submarine, and the sea, a peaceable plain; and the night became gently lit for him by the moon, so too, we should make the same supplication: *There is no god but You, Glory be unto You! Indeed I was among the wrongdoers.*"[57]

As with the preceding verse, Bediuzzaman is expounding this verse in the

54. *Lem'alar*, 8 / *The Flashes Collection*, 21.
55. *Lem'alar*, 8 / *The Flashes Collection*, 22.
56. Qur'an, 21:87.
57. *Lem'alar*, 6 / *The Flashes Collection*, 19.

light of today's conditions, as well as proving that the Holy Qur'an will endure till the end of the world.

I should say that although there are not a great many of such passages, great benefit is to be had from every part of the Risale-i Nur Collection, for it contains logical, and satisfying answers to very many questions related to religion, and man's social and spiritual life, which every inquisitive person is curious about. Bediuzzaman's knowledge, his balanced logic, his perception of problems, the breadth of his vision, the clarity of his expression, his comprehensive view, and so on, are some of his characteristics reflected in the Risale-i Nur.

I want to bring this paper to a close with his following concise words[58] about worship:

"The spirit of worship is sincerity, and sincerity is to perform worship only because it is commanded. If some other wisdom or benefit is shown as the reason for worship, such worship is null and void."

* * *

58. *İşârâtü'l-İ'caz*, 142.

KNOWLEDGE, THOUGHT

An Evaluation of the Risale-i Nur from the Point of View of Knowledge and the Categorization of Knowledge

Alparslan Açıkgenç

The primary meaning of science (*ilim*) is 'knowledge' (*bilgi*). If we keep in mind this general and primary meaning, it will give us a clue in categorizing knowledge. It has first to be emphasized that when saying 'classification of the sciences,' the term 'science' expresses disciplines. But from the point of view of a matter that might appear to be a precondition for this classification, we posit the concept of 'science' being studied in this general and primary meaning. What we mean by this is reaching a classification of the sciences by moving from the most general meaning of science to the most particular.

If we approach the subject from this angle, we may consider all the knowledge we acquire to be mental experiences. However, some knowledge, acquired through education and teaching, is doomed to be considered the same sort as other knowledge, despite differing with respect to quality and content. Knowledge of this sort is tied to experience, but is beyond it. For if it was close to experience, it could not become abstract and be generalized. Thus, in the most

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general meaning, we can speak of the existence of two sorts of knowledge: the first is 'experiential knowledge,' which is necessary for us in daily life and which we acquire almost naturally. The second is pure, abstract knowledge, acquired through particular methods and within the framework of particular subjects, which we call 'science' or 'scientific knowledge.' For knowledge of this sort is broken off from the disparateness of experiential knowledge, and being set in a certain order forms a mass of knowledge that may be expressed in abstract concepts. We give this the name of a particular science as a discipline.

The following conclusion emerges from the above explanation: the thing we generally call "knowledge" is the entirety of our mental store. In this general definition, everything in our minds, general experiences, beliefs, hypotheses, institutions, views, understandings, ideas, prejudices, etc. we consider to be knowledge. In which case, everything in our minds is a part of our knowledge, and even if it is wrong, we use it from time to time both in our daily lives, and in our scientific work. So if it is said that "knowledge is only a statement which is absolutely true," in my opinion it expresses inadequately what we understand by knowledge. For absolute truth is only one particular sort of knowledge.

The sciences, from the point of view that they concern us here, are clear. Here we therefore want to restrict knowledge to every kind of scientific knowledge. Thus 'science' in the technical sense includes knowledge of all the physical sciences; we consider under these, knowledge of the sciences like physics, chemistry, biology, and astronomy, as well as social sciences like sociology, history, and anthropology, and human sciences like philosophy, ethics, and psychology, as well as Islamic sciences like *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *kalām*, and *fiqh*. Thus, when studied in the most general meaning, in regard to its concerning our study here, the concept of science will be restricted to a particular kind of knowledge.

What concerns us here is to try to define the Risale-i Nur's place within our understanding of knowledge, and to demonstrate the importance of this. It was for this reason that we firstly set out what we understand by science. Now, by reaching a general classification of the sciences, we shall try to find the Risale-i Nur's place within that classification. This project is important from this point of view, that if it can be shown firstly whether or not there is any science in the Risale-i Nur, and then the existence of a science can be demonstrated, it may be shown what sort of science this is. I should state immediately that methodologically my approach here will be based on the Islamic viewpoint. I have described in detail in a previous study what I mean by this, so shall merely apply it here without discussing it further.[1] The Qur'an and Hadith will be used as basic sources in defining and classifying this science, and interpretation of these and discussion of them as basic points of departure will be presented from the point of view of the sciences related to our subject. I shall also attempt to describe briefly the arguments in favour of this approach from the point of view of defending[2] its basis.

1. See, Açıkgenç, Alparslan, *Bilgi Felsefesi*, Istanbul, Insan Yayınları 1992.
2. For more detailed explanation, see the above work.

Since in order to make a general evaluation of the sciences we have to look briefly at Islam's basic sources, we have to study any possible results that may emerge from these sources. For example, in the Qur'an we see that a particular science (*ilim*) is spoken of. Essentially, this particular science's source is revelation, so we are obliged to refer to the Qur'an in order to understand its nature.

If we study the Qur'an very closely, we see that before everything the Qur'an is describing knowledge (*bilgi*). If we do not understand or we ignore how knowledge is characterized from the Qur'an's point of view, we shall be faced with the danger of missing the Qur'an's chief aim. For both the Qur'an, and the Sunna of the Prophet attach the greatest importance to knowledge. But the Qur'an emphasizes that the knowledge to which it gives importance has to be qualified by particular characteristics. Since what we are discussing here is the evaluation of knowledge (*ilim*) in the Risale-i Nur within the framework of this characterization, we shall attempt to consider the question from this point of view. We shall begin by looking at the importance given to knowledge by the Qur'an and Sunna.

By saying that *Those truly fear God among His servants, who have knowledge*,[3] the Qur'an is not only emphasizing the importance of knowledge, it is also pointing out the highest level that scholars have to reach. The verse, "*Are equal, those who know and those who do not know?*"[4] shows in the clearest fashion the value of knowledge, and in my opinion indicates scientific knowledge. Moreover, God's Messenger was commanded to pray: "*O my Sustainer! Advance me in knowledge.*"[5] It is possible to extract meanings pointing indirectly to the importance of knowledge from many other verses similar to the above.[6]

There are also a large number of Hadiths which emphasize the importance of knowledge (*ilim*) as knowledge (*bilgi*). If we take a look at only a few of these, we see that in Bukhari, "decline in knowledge and increase in ignorance" is a sign of the end of the world (*ashrāṭ al-sā'a*).[7] God's Messenger (PBUH) also said: "When no scholars remain, people will choose the ignorant as their leaders. When these are asked something, they will reply despite being ignorant, and will therefore lead astray both themselves and others."[8] And in many books of Hadith, it is related that God's Messenger said:

> "Since those who seek knowledge are happy with what they do, the angels overspread them with their wings. Whatever there is on the land and in the heavens, and even the fishes in the seas, pray for forgiveness for those with knowledge. The superiority of the learned over the one who worships, is the superiority of the moon (due to its light) over the other stars. The scholars are the heirs of the prophets. For

3. Qur'an, 35:28.
4. Qur'an, 39:9.
5. Qur'an, 20:114.
6. See for example, 3:18; 4:157; 6:119, 140-4; 16:25; 31:20; etc.
7. *Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-'Ilm, 71, 72.
8. *Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-'Ilm, 86.

the prophets left not riches and possessions as their legacy, but knowledge. Let those who desire to acquire this, hasten after it gratefully."[9]

In another Hadith it says: "When a person dies, everything he has done comes to an end (with respect to merit) with the exception of three things: ongoing charity, knowledge that is profited from, and a righteous child who prays for him."[10] While another is: "The ink of the scholars is superior to the blood of the martyrs."[11] Numbers have also been used in order to illustrate these more clearly.[12] And in the *Sunan* of Abu Da'ud are the following Hadiths, in summary: "The path leading to knowledge is the path leading to Paradise." "As the full-moon shines brighter than the stars, so the scholars are superior to the pious who worship day and night." "The scholars are the heirs of the prophets." "If knowledge is asked of someone and he does not impart what he knows, he shall be punished in the hereafter with Hell-fire." While in the section *Kitāb al-'Ilm* in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Tirmidhi includes the following Hadiths, in meaning: "To seek knowledge is to push open the door of Paradise." "So long as one on the way of knowledge does not leave that way, he is on God's way." Although there is no *Kitāb al-'Ilm* in the *Sunan* of Ibn Maja, we find this important Hadith: "It is obligatory for every Muslim to seek knowledge."[13]

In the above-mentioned verses and Hadiths, which show the great importance of knowledge (*'ilm*), the word *'ilm* has been interpreted as 'knowledge' (*bilgi*). Just as despite in fact being used in the meaning of 'knowledge,' when considered carefully in the context of the Qur'an and Sunna, we may see easily that what is meant by the word *'ilm* is a particular sort of knowledge. For instance, it is said in the verse: "*Were you to follow their desires after the knowledge that has reached you, then would you find neither protector nor helper against God.*"[14] Since what was sent to God's Messenger was revelation, the knowledge here must be revelation. And truly in many places in the Qur'an, knowledge (*'ilm*) refers to the knowledge brought by revelation: "*If anyone disputes in this matter with you now after knowledge has come to you...*"[15] "*Thus We have*

9. *Abū Dā'ūd*, al-'Ilm, 1; *Tirmidhī*, al-'Ilm, 19; *Nasā'ī*, al-Ṭahāra, 112; *Ibn Māja*, al-Muqaddima, 17; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, iv, 239, 241; v, 196.

10. *Muslim*, al-Waṣiyya, 1631; Bukhārī, *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

11. al-Hindi, 'Alī al-Muttaqī, *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, Beirut 1985, x, 14, Nos: 28714-5. al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī states that this Hadith is false; see, *Ta'rīkh al-Baghdād*, ii, 193. Ibn al-Jawziyya was of the same view; see, *al-'Ilal al-Mutanāhiyya*, Faysalabad, Pakistan, Idarat al-'Ulum al-Athariyya 1981, i, 71-2. It is said there are numerous fabricated Hadiths on this subject. But in my view, even if they are not Hadiths, they were accepted without difficulty by Muslims since they reflected the attitude towards knowledge which had been instilled in the people of that time. So, because of the importance Muslims of that time attached to knowledge, even if a Hadith which exalted knowledge was false, it still reflected the importance which they gave knowledge. In which case, discussions of this sort even, may be mentioned in order to highlight the importance of knowledge in Islamic circles.

12. See for example, Rosenthal, Franz, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam*, Leiden, E. J. Brill 1970, 20. When combing the sections 'Kitab al-'Ilm' in the books of Hadith, I found this book useful, with the exception of Bukhari.

13. *Ibn Māja*, al-Muqaddima, 17, No: 224; 1, No: 81 (Egypt 1951). For other narrations, see, *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, x, 131, Nos: 28651-4.

14. Qur'an, 2:120.

15. Qur'an, 3:61.

revealed it to be a judgement of authority in Arabic. Were you to follow their [vain] desires after the knowledge which has reached you, then would you find neither protector for defender against God."[16] "*...Know that this revelation is sent down [replete] with the knowledge of God...*"[17] "*We gave [in the past] knowledge to David and Solomon.*"[18] We cannot conclude from all these verses that the Qur'an identifies revelation with knowledge. Similarly, there are verses which show clearly that they are not the same thing: "*Verily We have brought them a scripture which We expound with knowledge, a guidance and mercy for those who believe.*"[19] This verse demonstrates the importance of knowledge as knowledge, and states that revelation brought "a particular knowledge." While in Sura al-Ra'd verse 43, the phrase "*such as have knowledge of the Book*" distinguishes between revelation and the knowledge revelation has brought. This distinction is to be understood from numerous other verses as well.[20]

Nevertheless, the fact that revelation is not to be identified with knowledge does not necessitate denying the tie between them. On the contrary, all the above verses make a very subtle connection between knowledge and revelation. We shall discuss this connection in greater detail below in relation to the Risale-i Nur. Here I want to point out two more aspects of knowledge which emerge as the result of analysis. The first we may call 'revelational knowledge,' which is the knowledge brought by the Qur'an itself. While the second is the knowledge we acquire in whatever form, which is illumined through revelational knowledge. Now in order to be able to set this out more clearly, I shall attempt to describe the relation from the Qur'anic angle of revelation and knowledge.

As in one respect the extension of the Qur'an in society, the Sunna reflects very well the subtle connection between revelation and knowledge. In fact, in Hadiths the relation between revelation and knowledge is so powerful that the scholars of that first age understood knowledge of Hadith from the word *al-'ilm*. This is shown clearly in the sections called *Kitāb al-'Ilm* in the books of Hadith. In the following Hadith even, religion, the extension of revelation, is presented to Muslims with this totality of knowledge and revelation: "When God wishes good for a person, He increases their knowledge of religion."[21] Thus, although revelation and knowledge are not identical, there being a very close and fine tie between them shows that revelation gains a different dimension for knowledge. This dimension is doubtless, from the point of view of the Qur'an, that of belief (*īmān*). Just as many verses state that some things are known only by believers: "*Those who believe know that it is truth from their Sustainer.*"[22] "*Nay, the wrongdoers [merely] follow their own lusts, being devoid of knowledge...*"[23] "*Yet*

16. Qur'an, 13:37.

17. Qur'an, 11:14.

18. Qur'an, 27:15.

19. Qur'an, 7:52.

20. See for example, 11:14; 19:43; 27:40; 6:143.

21. *Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-'Ilm, 64.

22. Qur'an, 2:26.

23. Qur'an, 30:29.

there are among men those who dispute about God, without knowledge and without guidance, and without a Book to enlighten them."[24] "*A similar [favour have you already received] in that We have sent among you a Messenger of your own, rehearsing to you Our signs, and purifying you, and instructing you in scripture and wisdom, and in new knowledge.*"[25] Thus, we may interpret the Qur'an putting knowledge and revelation in the same context in this way: revelation permeates knowledge, illuminating it and thus ensuring it is truth. In this way, the dimension of belief which revelation adds to knowledge demonstrates itself. The attitude a scholar acquires within the relationship of revelation-belief-knowledge is very different to that which, in the name of objectivity and impartiality, advises him to be unbiased towards acquired knowledge. For the attitude arising from the relationship between such a person and the knowledge he acquires is a very special circumstance which we may describe as 'enlightened knowledge.' In this circumstance, knowledge ceases being general and becomes qualified.

We see this alluded to in the Risale-i Nur in various ways: "Without the light of the heart the light of the mind will not shine; so long as the two lights are not combined, all is darkness."[26] The following fact, emphasized strongly by Bediuzzaman, throws light on the subject: "The sciences of religion are light of the conscience."[27] For the sciences of religion are the product of revelation, and they illuminate the heart as a result of the relationship between revelation and knowledge. And the great need of the enlightened heart for knowledge being stated indicates the attitude towards the knowledge we have called enlightened knowledge. The relationship of this knowledge, which revelational knowledge qualifies, with other sorts of knowledge is as a guide to them. We may consider this subject from some slightly different angles:

This qualified knowledge, which we may call 'enlightened knowledge,' is not merely a mental state which is combined with God's absolute knowledge — which comes with revelation— it is at the same time an existential level of existence tied to practice, reflecting conduct and a way of life. It is because of this that the Muslim scholar cannot be unbiased towards his knowledge; his knowledge necessitates that he acts in accordance with it, and it is also his duty to seek the knowledge which he has to act in accordance with.

This general conclusion shows clearly that the Qur'an and Sunna give importance to knowledge (*ilim*) as knowledge without distinguishing between different sorts of knowledge. However, whether science, or philosophy, or technological knowledge, if it has not been qualified by revelation, it means it has not risen to the level of Qur'anic enlightened knowledge. Enlightened knowledge is knowledge which revelation has infused with belief, and in the Islamic framework, is a level which all sorts of knowledge have to reach. The opposite of this knowledge

24. Qur'an, 31:20.
25. Qur'an, 2:151.
26. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Sözler*, Istanbul, Envar Neşriyat 1991, 705.
27. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Münâzarat*, Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1977, 72.

is ignorance. However knowledgeable a person is, and of whatever knowledge he is informed to the very highest degree, if he does not reach this level of knowledge, his knowledge is the equivalent of ignorance and harmful to mankind:

> "*But many do mislead [men] by their appetites unchecked by knowledge.*"[28] "*Lost are those who slay their children, from folly, without knowledge, and forbid the sustenance with God has provided for them, inventing [lies] against God.*"[29] "*But who does more wrong than one who invents a lie against God, to lead astray men without knowledge?*"[30]

If these verses are considered in the moral context, the thing meant by "without knowledge" (*bi-ghayri 'ilm*) or "ignorant" is not such people being totally devoid of knowledge, but the knowledge they have not having been illuminated by belief and revelation. For it is understood that the people mentioned in the verses are people who have knowledge. This question is also clarified in numerous other verses:

> "*He said: 'The knowledge [of when it will come] is only with God; I proclaim to you the mission on which I have been sent; but I see that you are a people in ignorance.'*"[31] "*But most of them are ignorant [of what revelation tells].*"[32] "*The servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, 'Peace!'*"[33]

Thus, in the Islamic context, "ignorant" does not refer only to those lacking knowledge, but to those with knowledge who do not allow revelation to suffuse their knowledge with belief. This is discussed with great clarity and effectiveness in the Risale-i Nur. We shall suffice with only one or two examples:

> "All attainments and perfections, all learning. all progress, and all sciences, have an elevated reality which is based on one of the Divine Names. On being based on the Name, which is concealed under numerous veils and has various manifestations and different spheres, the sciences and arts and attainments find their perfection and become reality. And this is not some incomplete and deficient shadow."[34]

It is understood from this that enlightened knowledge can be attained only deficiently and partially without revelation, and this is not something that Islam wants. For revelation is not only an aspect which qualifies knowledge, it is itself also knowledge. For numerous matters like God's existence, His essence, the hereafter, the nature of revelation, and human freedom, which the Qur'an calls "the Unseen," can only be known through revelation. Thus, knowledge of them is revelational knowledge. And this shows that revelation comprises knowledge.

28. Qur'an, 6:119.
29. Qur'an, 6:140.
30. Qur'an, 6:144.
31. Qur'an, 46:23.
32. Qur'an, 6:111.
33. Qur'an, 25:63.
34. *Sözler*, 262-3 / *The Words* [Eng. trans.], Istanbul, Sözler Publications 1993, 270.

We shall attempt to explain this subject further, since it is dealt with in the Risale-i Nur. Let us suppose an eminent scholar makes new discoveries about the circulation of the blood, and throwing new light on the nature of red and white blood corpuscles, discovers a new method which greatly facilitates the treatment of blood cancer. However, believing that through this discovery people will know how they can be saved from illness, he starts to deny the relation of a Divine power with these. In this situation, even if his knowledge of physical matters is right, since his situating it in a world view that has led to his denying God, the conclusion he has reached is wrong, and his knowledge will be mere sophistry. Thus, as Bediuzzaman said:

> "Medicine is a science, and also an art; it is ultimately based on the Absolutely Wise One's Name of Healer, and through seeing the compassionate manifestations of that Name in the vast pharmacy of the face of the earth, medicine finds its perfection and becomes reality."[35]

It is thus saved from being sophistry. Again, relying on this fact:

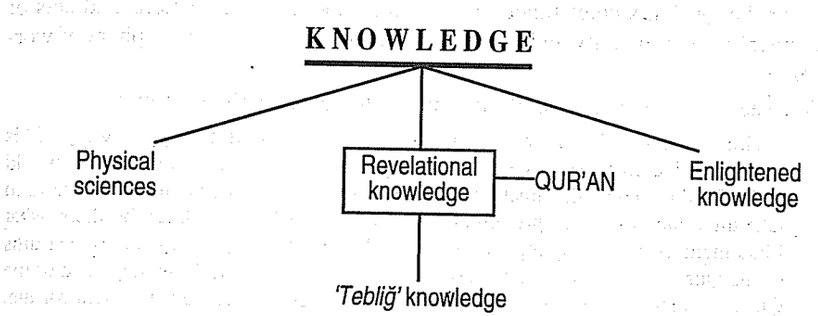
> "Philosophy without religion is a sophistry divorced from reality and an insult to the universe."[36]

It is understood from this that the qualification of knowledge gives rise to a moral dimension. Hadiths have dealt with this dimension to a greater extent, thus implanting in the heads of Muslims a mentality springing from Islamic knowledge. For example, it is said in a Hadith which illustrates this moral dimension: "A person who teaches knowledge to one unworthy of it will have draped a necklace of precious stones, gold and emeralds on a pig."[37] It is also related that God's Messenger (PBUH) prayed: "O God! I seek refuge with you from useless knowledge."[38] That is to say, knowledge that is not enlightened by revelation causes harm to people rather than benefit. It is understood from this that in the Islamic context, if knowledge is indifferent towards life and the living of it and it is not qualified, it is considered unimportant. Only, it should be repeated that since being qualified adds a moral dimension, all these warnings about unbeneficial knowledge should be heeded by man. For it is again man who produces useless knowledge. However, the knowledge revelation teaches does not bear this characteristic. For the knowledge that comes in that way is itself enlightened. We may mention the following Hadith which emphasizes this moral dimension: "One who seeks knowledge for worldly aims will go to Hell.[39] Thus, enlightened knowledge advances a fundamental attitude which has to be adopted in relation to knowledge.

The conclusions we have reached up to here present a general classification of knowledge. Firstly we specified what we called 'experiential knowledge,' which

35. *Sözler*, 262-3 / *The Words*, 270-1.
36. *Sözler*, 132 / *The Words*, 145.
37. *Ibn Māja*, al-Muqaddima 17, No: 224; 1, No: 81 (Egypt 1951). For other narrations, see, *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, x, 131, Nos: 28651-4.
38. *Muslim*, Kitāb al-Dhikr, 73; *Abū Dā'ūd*, Witr, 32; *Tirmidhī*, Da'wāt, 68; *Nasā'ī*, al-Isti'ādha, 13, 18, 21, 64; *Ibn Māja*, al-Muqaddima, 23; al-Du'ā', 2, 3; *Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, ii, 168, 198, 340, 365, 451; iii, 192, 255, 283; iv, 371, 381.
39. *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, x, 196, No: 29034.

is the knowledge we acquire in daily life and is necessary for life under normal conditions. Secondly, the knowledge about the universe, which we acquire according to a particular method. And thirdly, the knowledge the Qur'an, which is direct revelation, conveys to us; we called this 'revelational knowledge.' As is understood from the above-mentioned verses, revelational knowledge is revelation itself. However, any interpretation we may make of any verse of the Qur'an according to our own understanding, is not revelational knowledge, —although the verse itself is revelation— it is knowledge based on revelation. Since such knowledge is generally used for guiding others and *tebliğ* (communicating the teachings of the Qur'an), I shall call this '*tebliğ* knowledge,' so that it is not confused with revelational knowledge. Whereas enlightened knowledge is a state qualified by experiential knowledge which we may reach through either revelational knowledge permeating all our other knowledge directly, or through or *tebliğ* knowledge, which is based on revelation, permeating it. Now, as the most general classification of knowledge, we may illustrate our conclusion in the below diagram.



As was seen, the knowledge reached through revelational knowledge and its interpretation and by applying its method exactly is *tebliğ* knowledge. Being based entirely on revelation, its aim is the same as that of revelation. Its aim and purpose is not to acquire knowledge about the universe, like the physical sciences. What we understood from the above verses was that the concept of knowledge in the Qur'an is used to refer to both the knowledge brought by revelation, and the knowledge man may obtain from revelation, and the knowledge man may obtain about the universe (which here we defined as the physical sciences.) Thus we may claim that we have arrived at these three most general categories of knowledge from the Qur'anic angle.

We may now investigate in which of these three categories of knowledge the Risale-i Nur, our main subject, may be placed. Since revelational knowledge is the Qur'an (and other revealed scriptures), this category will be kept outside our investigation, for no other work can be included in that category of knowledge. Since the questions of the physical sciences are frequently discussed in the Risale-i Nur, it gives one the idea at first that the work may be put into that cate-

gory. But closer examination shows that these questions are not discussed as though they were part of the physical sciences. For example, blood circulation is discussed in the Risale-i Nur, but not as a question of biology; it is used as a means to the chief aim.[40] Moreover, the fact that numerous questions to do with philosophy are mentioned in the Risale-i Nur does not mean that it is philosophy. For since its basic aim is guidance, which is also the chief aim of revelation, or to use Bediuzzaman's frequently employed phrase "to save belief," all these matters are used as means for the basic aim. In fact, although numerous subjects that belong to *kalām* (theology) are discussed in detail in the Risale-i Nur, the work's purpose is not to teach *kalām*.[41] This shows us that essentially the Risale-i Nur should be considered within the framework of *tebliğ* knowledge. So in order to demonstrate this more clearly, we may discuss the characteristics of this knowledge, giving examples from the Risale-i Nur.

1. The basis and most important aim of *tebliğ* knowledge is guidance. For its only basis is revelation, and so it specifies its aim for its own goal. This is expressed very concisely but eloquently as follows in the Risale-i Nur:

"For the Qur'an's chief function is to teach about the perfections and acts of the sphere of dominicality and the duties and circumstances of the sphere of worship."[42]

We see a good explanation of this among Bediuzzaman's memoirs:

> "Tahir Pasha, the Governor of Van, assigned me a room in the upper storey of his residence. I used to stay there. Every night when I retired to my room I would recite for three hours the ninety books, about true facts, I had memorized. It used to take three months to get through all of them. Thanks be to God, my brothers, what I had memorized and my repetition of them became the steps to ascend to the truths of the Qur'an. Some time later I ascended to those truths and I saw that each of the Qur'an's verses encompasses the universe. The Qur'an was then sufficient for me, no need remained for anything else, any other book."[43]

He also describes the following:

> "Thirty years ago dreadful blows descended on the heedless head of the Old Said and he pondered over the assertion 'Death is a reality.' He saw himself in a muddy swamp. He sought help, searched for a way, tried to find a saviour. He saw that the ways were many; he was hesitant. He took an omen from the book *Futuh al-Ghayb* of Gawth al-A'zam, Shaykh Gilani (May God be pleased with him). It opened at these lines:
>
> "'You are in the *Dar al-Hikma*, so find a doctor who will heal your heart.'

40. *Sözler*, 593 / *The Words*, 662 fn 3.

41. He describes the difference between the science of *kalām* and the Risale-i Nur as follows: "Yes, the knowledge of God gained by means of theology does not afford a complete knowledge and a complete sense of the Divine presence. However, when gained in accordance with the method of the Qur'an of Miraculous Exposition, it affords both complete knowledge and gains a total sense of the Divine presence. God willing, all the parts of the Risale-i Nur perform the duty of an electric lamp on that light-filled highway of the Qur'an of Miraculous Exposition." *Mektûbat*, Istanbul, Envar Neşriyat 1991 / *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Letters 1928-1932*, Sözler Publications 1994, 388.

42. *Sözler*, 265 / *The Words*, 273.

43. Quote from, Erdem, Rahmi, *Davam*, Istanbul, Timaş Yayınları 1993, 94-5.

> "It is strange, but at that time I was a member of the *Darü'l-Hikmeti'l-İslamiye*. It was as though I was a doctor trying to heal the wounds of the people of Islam, but I was sicker than they. A sick person must look to himself first, then he may look to others. ... So I said: "You be my doctor!" ... I again opened the book and read it right through; I benefited a lot from that book of my first master. ... Then I saw the Letters (*Maktubat*) of Imam-i Rabbani and took it in my hands. I opened it with pure intention to take an omen. ... Only, the Imam persistently recommended in many of his letters what he wrote in these two, which was: "Make your *qibla* one." That is, take one person as your master and follow him; do not concern yourself with anyone else. This most important recommendation did not seem appropriate to my capacity and mental state. However much I thought: "Should I follow this one, or that one, or that other one?", I remained in a state of bewilderment. Each had different characteristics which drew me, one was not enough for me. While thus bewildered, it was imparted to my heart by God's mercy that "the head of these various ways and the source of these streams and the sun of these planets is the All-Wise Qur'an; the true single *qibla* is to be found in it. In which case, it is also the most elevated guide and most holy master." So I clasped it with both hands and clung on to it. ... That is to say, the Words and those lights, which proceed from the Qur'an, are not only scholarly matters pertaining to the intellect, they are rather matters of belief which pertain to the heart, the spirit, and spiritual states. They resemble most elevated and valuable knowledge of God."[44]

2. His describing the Risale-i Nur here as "not only scholarly matters pertaining to the intellect, they are rather matters of belief which pertain to the heart, the spirit, and spiritual states" stems from their being of *tebliğ* knowledge. *Tebliğ* knowledge arising directly from the Qur'an in this way expresses a further characteristic:

> "... the truths and perfections in the Words are not mine; they are the Qur'an's and they have issued from the Qur'an. The Tenth Word, for instance, consists of a few droplets filtered from hundreds of verses. The rest of the treatises are all like that."[45]

Here, the fact *tebliğ* knowledge springs directly from the Qur'an demonstrates the standpoint he used as a method.

3. *Tebliğ* knowledge is also 'renewal' *(tecdid)*, so the one representing this knowledge is a 'renewer' or 'regenerator.' Renewal is the restatement of the truths of revelation without their being changed, on the level of and in the style of the sciences of the century in question. That is to say, 'renewal' is not 'change' or 'substitution'; it is merely expression of the truth in conformity with the understanding of the age. But of course it means that the truth expressed in this way will be renewed in some respects. In consequence of this renewal, knowledge which had become inadequate and therefore ineffective is once again made adequate and effective. We observe this characteristic of renewal clearly in the Risale-i Nur:

> "Furthermore, the great majority of the works that have been written, the treatises, have been bestowed instantaneously and suddenly in consequence of some

44. *Mektûbat*, 355-6 / *Letters*, 418-9.

45. *Mektûbat*, 369 / *Letters*, 434.

need born in my spirit, not from any outside cause. Then when afterwards I have shown them to some friends, they have said that they are the remedy for the wounds of the present time. After they have been disseminated, I have understood from most of my brothers that they meet the needs of the times exactly and are like a cure for every ill."[46]

"Formerly, the fundamentals of belief were protected, submission was strong. Even if the intuitive knowledge of those with knowledge of God lacked proof, their expositions were acceptable and sufficient. But at this time, since the misguidance of science has stretched out its hand to the fundamentals and pillars [of belief], the All-Wise and Compassionate One of Glory, Who bestows a remedy for every ill, in consequence of my impotence and weakness, want and need, mercifully bestowed in these writings of mine which serve the Qur'an a single ray from the comparisons of the Noble Qur'an, which are a most brilliant manifestation of its miraculousness. ...

"*In Short:* Whatever beauty and effectiveness are found in my writings, they are only flashes of the Qur'anic comparisons. My share was only my intense need and my seeking, and my extreme impotence and my beseeching. The ill is mine, and the cure, the Qur'an's."[47]

"Most of the poetry of the blessed persons of that time, and some of the works of the religious scholars, discuss the results, fruits, and effulgences of the belief and knowledge of God. In their time, there was no attack on the fundamentals of belief, and the pillars of faith were not being shaken. Now, however, there is a severe and concerted attack on those fundamentals. Most of that poetry and those scholarly works addressed particular believers and individuals; they were not repulsing the awesome assaults of this age. As for the Risale-i Nur, as a miracle of the Qur'an, it saves the fundamentals of belief, and not benefiting from existent belief, assists through its many and brilliant proofs, in demonstrating, proving, and preserving belief, and the saving it from doubts and scepticism. For this reason, those who study it carefully declare that everyone has need of it at this time, like [they have for] bread and medicine.... Also, the Risale-i Nur does not only teach with the feet and eye of the reason like the works of other scholars, nor does it only move with the illuminations and inspirations of the heart like the saints, it rather flies to the loftiest peaks by progressing with the feet of the uniting of the reason and heart, and assistance of the spirit and other subtle faculties. It rises to places that not the feet, but the eye of aggressive philosophy cannot reach, and demonstrates the truths of belief to eyes that are blind even."[48]

If such an expression is appropriate, the language of *tebliğ* knowledge is extremely 'sharp.' In other words, it is very effective and forceful. This in fact stems from the state of mind and heart of the person charged with conveying the message. He has dedicated himself to doing this with every level of his being. His way of life, his goal, the meaning of his being are all to convey the message (*tebliğ*). The one doing this cannot write any truth he himself has not experienced. It is because of this that he has an effect over those he addresses both in all the scholarly matters that he writes which address the reason, and in the questions of belief, which address the heart and spirit and affect mental states —so

46. *Mektûbat*, 375 / *Letters*, 441.
47. *Mektûbat*, 376-7 / *Letters*, 443-4.
48. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Kastamonu Lahikası*, Istanbul, Envar Neşriyat 1990, 11-12.

long of course that the one addressed heeds him sincerely! We may listen to a number of examples of this from the Risale-i Nur:

"Yes, the knowledge of God gained by means of theology does not afford a complete knowledge and a complete sense of the Divine presence. However, when gained in accordance with the method of the Qur'an of Miraculous Exposition, it affords both complete knowledge and gains a total sense of the Divine presence. God willing, all the parts of the Risale-i Nur perform the duty of an electric lamp on that light-filled highway of the Qur'an of Miraculous Exposition."[49]

"The Words that have been written are not supposition, they are affirmation; they are not submission, they are belief; they are not intuitive knowledge, they are a testifying and witnessing; they are not imitating, they are verification; they are not taking the part of something, they are exercise of the mind; they are not sufism, they are reality; they are not a claim, they are the proof within the claim."[50]

"The Risale-i Nur is not only repairing some minor damage or some small house; it is repairing vast damage and the all-embracing citadel which contains Islam, the stones of which are the size of mountains. And it is not striving to reform only a private heart and an individual conscience; it is striving to cure with the medicines of the Qur'an and belief and the Qur'an's miraculousness the collective heart and generally-held ideas, which have been breached in awesome fashion by the tools of corruption prepared and stored up over a thousand years, and the general conscience, which is facing corruption through the destruction of the foundations, currents, and marks of Islam which are the refuge of all and particularly the mass of believers.

"Certainly, for such universal breaches and awesome wounds, proofs and equipment of the utmost certitude and the strength of mountains, and well-proven medicines and numberless drugs of the effectiveness of a thousand remedies are necessary. Emerging at this time from the miraculousness of the Qur'an of Miraculous Exposition, the Risale-i Nur performs this function, and is also the means of advancing and progressing through the infinite degrees of belief."[51]

5. *Tebliğ* knowledge is the knowledge which penetrating all other knowledge, qualifies it, thus raising it to the level of enlightened knowledge. This conclusion shows us too that it is necessary that the revelational aspect is incorporated into the knowledge of all Muslim scholars, either themselves directly from the Qur'an, or having been taught by a teacher who achieved this. We may illustrate in striking fashion with an example from the Risale-i Nur how revelational knowledge is made to penetrate and suffuse philosophical knowledge, raising it to the level of enlightened knowledge:

"O world-worshipping man! Although you conceive of your world as very broad, it resembles a narrow grave. But since the walls of that narrow grave-like dwelling are of glass, they are reflected one within the other and stretch as far as the eye can see. While being narrow as a grave, your world appears to be as large as a town. For despite both the right wall, which is the past, and the left wall, which is the future, being non-existent, they are reflected one within the other, unfolding

49. *Mektûbat*, 330 / *Letters*, 388.
50. *Mektûbat*, 376 / *Letters*, 443.
51. *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 30.

the wings of present time, which is extremely brief and narrow. Reality mixes with imagination, and you suppose a non-existent world to be existent.

"Like on being spun round at speed, a line appears to be broad like a surface, despite in reality being a fine line, your world is in reality narrow, but due to your heedlessness, delusions, and imagination, its walls have drawn far apart. If driven by a calamity you stir in that narrow world, you will hit your head on the wall, which you supposed to be distant. It will dispel the illusions in your head and banish your sleep. Then you will see that that broad world of yours is narrower than the grave, finer than the Bridge of Sirat. Your life passes faster than lightning, it pours away more swiftly than tea.

"Since worldly life and the life of the flesh and animal life are thus, shake free of animality, leave behind corporeality, enter the level of life of the heart and spirit! You will find a sphere of life, a world of light, more broad than the world you imagined to be broad. The key to that world is to make the heart utter the sacred words 'There is no god but God,' which express the mysteries of Divine Unity and knowledge of God, and to make the spirit work them."[52]

Here, a psychological error is indicated which results from the concepts of existence and non-existence being applied to the fact of time, and the sorts of disasters this error can drive man to are examined extremely effectively from the angle of revelational knowledge. Thus, both philosophy and psychology are employed on the way of *tebliğ*. If the basic aim here had been philosophy or psychology, the nature of the concepts of existence and non-existence would have been studied from the philosophical angle, and how the errors occurred explained perhaps by experimental and observational methods. However, without paying much attention to these questions, it moved on to explain *tebliğ* knowledge, which is necessary for Islam to be reflected in life. In which case, the aim of *tebliğ* knowledge is to prevent the sciences being broken off from one another and becoming unrelated to each other, and particularly to prevent their relations with revelation being severed. It is this that the Risale-i Nur aims to do this age. For according to this, it is *tebliğ* knowledge which illuminates man's spiritual and inner aspects. While it is the physical sciences that illuminate his reason. (Bediuzzaman refers to the former as "the sciences of religion," and to the latter as "the sciences of civilization.") It is through the blending of the two that the truth is revealed. If they are separated, it leads to bigotry in the former, and scepticism and trickery in the latter.[53]

6. The conclusion we have reached shows that *tebliğ* knowledge uses the knowledge of all other sciences for its own aims and goal. But it is not concerned with questions in the manner of the knowledge we call the physical sciences. As we stated previously, Bediuzzaman says: "For the Qur'an's chief function is to teach about the perfections and acts of the sphere of dominicality and the duties and circumstances of the sphere of worship."[54] So like the Qur'an, which teaches this knowledge, written works with a similar aim will discuss

52. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Lem'alar*, Istanbul, Envar Neşriyat 1990, 136-7 / *The Flashes Collection* [Eng. trans.], Istanbul, Sözler Publications 1995, 186.

53. See, *Münâzarat*,m 72.

54. See, fn. 42.

other branches of knowledge for this same basic purpose, but will not discuss the matters they contain in detail.

7. Since its aim is guidance, *tebliğ* knowledge generally addresses all classes of people without distinction. For this reason, it employs every sort of subject and means from the simplest to the most profound, and from the most straightforward manner of exposition to the most precise and scholarly methods. Thus people from all sectors may benefit from it in proportion to their endeavour and abilities. Nevertheless, of course there will be a difference between the degree a learned person profits and an illiterate one.

"I shall tell you about a conversation between my elder brother Abdullah and myself forty to fifty years ago: my late brother was the special disciple of Hazret Ziyaeddin, one of the great saints. Even if it is to excess, the followers of the *tariqats* consider acceptable tremendous love and good will towards their spiritual guides. My late brother said: 'Hazret Ziyaeddin knows all the sciences. He has knowledge of everything in the universe like the supreme spiritual pole.' He described his truly wondrous stations in order to bind me to him. I said to my brother: 'You are exaggerating. If I was to see him, I would silence him in numerous matters. Moreover, you don't in fact love him as much as I do. For you love a Ziyaeddin you imagine as a supreme spiritual pole who knows all the sciences in the universe; that is, you are bound to him because of that title... If the veil of the unseen was to be drawn back and the truth was to become apparent, your love would either evaporate or it would be reduced fourfold. Whereas I earnestly love that holy person like you, and appreciate him. For he is a sincere, effective, and important guide for the people of belief, in the way of reality within the sphere of the Sunna of the Prophet. I would sacrifice my spirit for him for this service of his, whatever his personal station and rank. If the veil was to be drawn back and his true station was to become apparent, I would not withdraw or give him up or my love diminish, on the contrary I would adhere to him with even greater respect and appreciation. That is, I love a true Ziyaeddin, while you love an imaginary one!' Being a fair-minded and exacting scholar, my brother accepted my point of view and applauded it.

"O valuable students of the Risale-i Nur and my brothers more fortunate and self-sacrificing than myself! Perhaps your excessively favourable views of my person will not harm you, but perspicacious persons like you should look to your service and duties, and from that point of view. If the veil was to be drawn back, my altogether faulty nature would cause you to flee from me. So as not to make you flee from my brotherhood and for you to regret it, do not bind yourselves to stations you imagine in my person which are far higher than my due. In relation to you I am a brother; to be spiritual guide is beyond my due. I am not your teacher either, but your fellow student. Because of my faults I am in need of your compassionate prayers and your support. It is not your awaiting help and support from me, it is my right that you help me. Through Almighty God's grace and munificence, and according to the rule of the division of labour, I share in a most sacred, most important, and most valuable service, of benefit to all believers. The extraordinary importance, worth, guidance, and teaching of the collective personality obtained through our solidarity is sufficient for us."[55]

55. *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 88-9.

Conclusion

As may be understood from our explanations, *tebliğ* knowledge forms the basis of Islam being reflected in life. Our demonstrating that the Risale-i Nur has to be knowledge of this sort is also an indication of its existence. Therefore, I have not considered it necessary to examine it in detail from this point of view. Moreover, in Islamic history, there have been works that may be placed in this category, the best examples of which are Abu Talib al-Makki's *Qūt al-Qulūb* and Ghazzali's *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*.

If this fact is borne in mind, both the nature of the Risale-i Nur will be better understood, and it will put a stop to the many irrelevant disputes about the work. We also should not forget that like other Islamic *mujahids*, Bediuzzaman strove for Islam to be reflected in life and wrote this work for this purpose, in the understanding of its being the duty of a Muslim scholar. Any criticisms that are to be made of him, should be made within the same understanding, as is not only the requirement of science, but is also a characteristic of the enlightened knowledge which Islam itself seeks in scholars.

* * *

Islamic Knowledge in the Information Age and Bediuzzaman

Mim Kemal Öke

"For all our deprivation and suffering, we were happy at being able to fight for all the things we love. But you attack those sides of man unconnected with the idea of the fatherland... You fight as though in a blind rage, giving importance not to systems of thought but to guns and explosions, wanting to wipe out everything... What you understand by Europe is land for your soldiers, stores for your wheat, the industry you have moulded to yourselves, the ideas you repress... You have never believed the face of the earth has any meaning; and this has led you to the idea that everything is the same, that good and evil can be defined in any way wished. Lacking any human or sacred ethic, you supposed the only values on which you could rely were those of the animal world, that is, force and trickery. You thought man was a non-entity, that his spirit could be killed; in the most unfeeling period of history, a person's effort could have been nothing other than chasing after superiority and his morality, to occupy other countries... You have grown weary of fighting the sacred, and so have rested in this adventure, which consists of smashing souls and laying waste lands..."[1]

Prof. Dr. MİM KEMAL ÖKE

Professor Öke was born in Istanbul in 1955, and graduated from the American Robert College in Istanbul after Şişli Terakki High School. He received his degree in history and economics from Cambridge University, England in 1977, then his M.A. from Sussex University, and his M. Phil. from Cambridge. He did post-doctoral work in Istanbul. In 1979 he worked for the Palestine Office attached to the Security Council of the United Nations. Prof. Öke has published various articles outside Turkey and books on Ottoman history of the later period. In 1984 he was made Assistant Professor, and in 1985 was appointed as advisor to the General Director of the Dept. of Turkish Political History of Turkish Radio and Television. He has prepared various historical series for Turkish Television. In 1990 he was appointed Professor and continues to teach at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul. In addition, Prof. Öke writes articles on history for a daily newspaper, serves on the board of directors of a number of cultural foundations, makes television programmes, and continues his historical research. He has published more than ten books and numerous articles in Turkish and English.

1. Quote from, Camus, Albert, *Bir Alman Dosta Mektuplar*, by author in art. "Bir Sırp Dosta Mektuplar," *Zaman Gazetesi*, 14/8/95.

These lines were not written about the Serbian murderers; they issued from the pen of the French philosopher Albert Camus, to execrate the Nazi activities during the Second World War. In his essay The Rebel, the Nobel Prize-winning Camus wrote the following, as though he was describing the present:

> "... There are crimes of passion and of logic. The border between them is indistinct. But when it comes to premeditation, the criminal code distinguishes between them in pretty clear fashion. This is the time of the perfect premeditated crime. Our criminals are not unarmed youths pleading passion; they are elderly and their defences are irrefutable. Their evidence is philosophy, which serves everyone and has made the killer the judge... Formerly, crime was isolated like a scream, now like a science it is universal. Yesterday it was tried, today it is made law..."[2]

i) The anatomy of the birth of the 'information society,' fraught with contradictions

Today, attired in violence, power is used for ethnic massacres. The moral brakes have failed that would put a stop to the aggression. How quickly did hopes fade after *glasnost*, on which they had been pinned under the name of 'the New World Order.' For the powerful had turned the face of the globe into a slaughterhouse. On the one hand, a bloody chaos had run riot in the international arena, while on the other, some experts claimed 'the psychosphere' was undergoing a serious process of change. If we can read the 'zeitgeist' correctly, the world is long past crossing the threshold of the 'information age.' If one looks to the engineers of change, the futurologists, and the observers with vision, the communications revolution pushed open the door of an information society unparalleled in human history. It is said that while approaching the year 2000, the megatrends, the continuous and swift advances in the communications sector, have caused radical changes in man's view of life. So much so that, while the power which until yesterday was considered the heart of the matter was tied to military or economic factors, it has been placed through this global transformation on the axis of knowledge or information. They say that the 21st century will be the century not of the countries with the largest petrol reserves, or those who produce most cars, or govern gold prices, or boast of being the world's bread-basket, but the countries who produce the fastest and most powerful chip for the lowest price.[3] The chip under discussion is the micro computer chip which performs the function of numerous transistors.

The purpose of this paper is not to present a panorama of the latest discoveries. Anyway, perhaps you too follow a variety of press organs and know that one may 'surf' on the information highway called the Internet, and with one's laptop computer, modem, and mobile phone, visit the libraries, play at the stock exchange, do the shopping, and even visit some museums if you still have time, all while sitting on the beach. You have learnt too that through advances in molecular biology, artificial intelligence has been installed in mechanical robots, and through the bounties of biotechnology, the atlas of man's chromosomes has

2. Quoted by author in art. "Tarih Tortudur!", *Türkiye Gazetesi*, 9/8/95.
3. Erkan, Hüsnü, *Bilgi Toplumu ve Ekonomik Gelişme*, Ankara 1993, 52.

been drawn, and thus intervening in his genetic material, treatment for fatal illnesses has been made possible. What they say is this, that since the advances in question have led to a mass expansion of knowledge, to the extent that they can be kept up with, so long as the principle of social benefit is adhered to, it promises a brand new Eldorado for mankind, one of peace and affluence. "The information society will bring about a cultural environment in which reconciliation, tolerance, majority, and participation will be more easily obtained. For most of the extremes in the clashes between people arise from lack of knowledge..."[4]

However, while the information society is still at the crawling stage, the ecological balance is being turned upside down by man's destruction of nature, and as though proving Malthus to be right, our planet is consuming itself. It has been possible for the Internet to become the newsheet of terrorists, and due to the sharp wits of some people, with certain computer accessories and in interactive fashion, to be a means of gratifying sexual fantasies. Moreover, due to commercial interests, the endeavours of genetic engineering are opening up a field of exploitation so wide as to both encourage prostitution,[5] and through cloning to produce Dr. Frankenstein's, and to produce weapons that having been given their genetic code, will be able to wipe out a race when the trigger is pulled.

This situation is not without people intelligent enough to question the way it is going. If we accept the arguments of those who think like Drucker, and believe the world has reached the threshold of going beyond modernity,[6] and if we try to discover what lies at the bottom of the above-mentioned phenomena by putting it under the microscope, we will be confronted by the scientific revolution, and the industrial revolution, which acted as the scientific revolutions's midwife. The scientific revolution formed a break in man's historical process, and without analyzing the anatomy of this break it is not possible to prepare for tomorrow.

ii) Concrete facts about the 'mechanical universe' mentality

The scientific revolution began with Copernicus, and was fixed in a particular system with Newton. To define this system briefly: with the additions of Laplace, it is a mechanical order which insists on accepting no explanation other than the determinism of the laws of nature. The world is quite simply like a cosmic automaton. It is a huge clock which works according to physical and arithmetical laws. Bacon's insisted that these can be understood through observation and experiment. Evolutional progress, which rules time, is entirely a succession of coincidences, so that in the light of Darwin's theory of species, life even is the "work" of pure chance, not the result of the conception of any Divine world. In this context, there could be no question of attaching any metaphysical value to creation. It was as though contemporary science had bound the setting up of the

4. Ibid., 107.
5. Enis, Münevver Ahmed, *Cinsel Ahlak ve Biyolojik Tehlike* [Turk. trans: K. Dönmez], Istanbul 1994; Enis, Münevver Ahmed, "Cesur Yeni DNA: İnsan Tanrı Rolü Mü Oynuyor?", in *Modern Tıbbın Ötesi*, Istanbul 1994.
6. Toffler, A. ve H., *XXI. Yüzyılın Şafağında ve Savaş Karşıtı Mücadele* [Turk. trans: M. Harmancı], Istanbul 1994.

universe to a 'meaninglessness syndrome.'[7] From this point of view, man even, keeping up with the determinism of environmental conditions in the atlas of time, appeared in the gene pool of nature.[8] Since Europe's historicity clashed with the Church, it was God who was to be addressed by man's anger. Like the mythical Prometheus, the man of the scientific revolution thought he could take his revenge on the sacred and win freedom by smashing the chains binding him to his so-called Creator, and tried to make good his losses. He experimented with exiling God from the world in the light of Descarte's philosophy, and preferred to denigrate the metaphysical, calling it an illusion, or fabrication, or speculative. 'Reason,' broken off from God, and from his spirit, which He had breathed into him, was sufficient. And reason became the sole authority in modern rationalism, permitting and proposing a person's conduct. With the secularization of nature and for the sake of humanity, the person who severed his connection with the Divine source made being human "absolute." In Nasr's words, from then on "everything was sacrificed for man, and the first thing to be sacrificed was God."[9] If one takes a look at the Positivists' catechism, the purpose of man, "a social creature," or "rational animal," was "to survive" in the struggle between the species governed by the laws of nature. Thus, if one returns to the scientific revolution, or to before that, science in the West from the Renaissance to the present has been restricted to dominating nature for the material prosperity of man, a worldly creature possessing mental powers.

With his theory which took biology as the starting point and gave direction to social relations, H. Spencer was to pave the way for social darwinism. Just like people, nations were subject to natural selection in the international system. If one considers the social prescription permitting Hobbes' "big fishes devour little fishes," by realizing the final stage of capitalism, it was the inevitable destiny of history that post-industrial revolution Europe did not get carried away by imperialism. In order to be powerful, it began to see the European philosophical tradition on the one hand, which based Darwin's assertions about the species on racialism in the way of biological materialism, and militarism on the other, as the sole logistic of the objective power of states. Morgenthau believed that despite being subject to severe criticism, the social sciences, which had been constructed on this cultural background, still preserved their relevance in respect to their approach to foreign affairs, and his work ensured this.

The main idea the American professor proposed was this: the sole relevant fact in the international arena is "power." The one with power gains dominance and his word is law. It is for this reason that there is a continuous struggle for power in the world arena. States continuously strive to gain power themselves and deprive of power their opponents. The writer's reader will limit this

7. Durcker, Peter F., *Kapitalist Ötesi Toplum* [Turk. trans: B. Çorakçı], Istanbul 1994; Toffler, A., *Üçüncu Dalga* [Turk. trans: A. Seden], Istanbul 1981; Naisbitt, J. ve Aburdene, P., *Megatrends 2000* [Turk. trans: E. Güven], Istanbul, n.d., n.p.

8. Walters, J. Donald, *Modern Düşüncenin Krizi: Anlamsızlık Sorununa Çözümler* [Turk. trans: Ş. Yalçın], Istanbul 1995, 21.

9. Duralı, Teoman, *Biyoloji Felsefesi*, Ankara 1992, 34-5.

tendency, which goes as far as proposing that "might is right," by equating imperialism with infringing the status quo. Power is required for self-interest, and the concept of self-interest is free of restrictions such as ethics, aesthetics, and religion. Unlike in individuals, virtue should not be sought in states. Like Lincoln, although he was a president applauded for his moral values, he recorded his political philosophy in this way:

> "I know how the best should be, and I do the best I can and I try to do it to the utmost. If in the end I am able to do the best, what has been said about me will have no value at all. If finally I come to a bad end and I haven't been able to do the best, all the angels will swear that I am right and the result won't change."

Morgenthau illustrates Britain's attitude on the eve of the Second World War with an example related to the application of the golden rules of political expedience. Whitehall declared war on Germany on the pretext that it had infringed Belgium's neutrality. It was in the interests of Britain's foreign policy to prevent the occupation of Belgium-Holland by an enemy force, but the diplomats of the time confess in their memoirs that London would not have lifted a finger in the event of the occupying power being any other than Germany. In the same way, the effort the West displayed in saving Kuwait from Saddam's anger, and its withholding it from Bosnia when it was faced with the Serbians' genocide, should be accepted as a sign, not of the West's double standards, but of its sole criterion, within the framework depicted by Morgenthau. According to this philosophy, the use of power, in whatever form, is not condemned. According to Morgenthau, Western civilization's so-called success lies in this power being restricted from time to time, whether by being balanced, or being divided. For the formation of ethical norms and their being accepted by world public opinion is neither what the system seeks or what it wants.[10] Both in its most savage period, and when domesticated (or reduced to the level of being 'a worn-out monster'), so long as it could still say: "non-interference," the system would still produce Camus' cry at the Nazis, and would go on producing it.

iii) An outline of postmodernism and 'the global crisis'

At the point finally arrived at in the deification of science, "there is widespread disenchantment, and many misgivings that man can rectify his evils," as people in the West themselves admit.[11] The following lines of Havel are especially worthy of note:

> "... It is my opinion that this crisis is directly related to the spirit of contemporary civilization, that is, the spirit of contemporary civilization which is apparent through the loss of metaphysical certainty and the living of the transcendent, and the disappearance of all suprapersonal moral authority and even of all every sort of sacredness."[12]

10. Nasr, Seyyid Hüseyin, *Makaleler* [Turk. trans: Ş. Yalçın], Istanbul 1995, i, 64.

11. Morgenthau, H. J., *Uluslararası Politika* [Turk. trans: Oran, B., ve Oskay, Ü.], Ankara 1970, i, 4, 12, 16, 296, 300.

12. Bergin, A., "Psychotherapy and Religious Values," in *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, No: 48 (1980), 95.

Havel also says that "the turning away from God" experienced in the modern age is, for mankind, "a being dragged towards mass suicide." In the process of the desecularization of society, which observers have called "God's revenge,"[13] the need for "the normalization" of science has come into the foreground. In the social sciences in particular, it has been emphasized that democracy is a system based on virtue, which will be preserved by from exploitation by upright citizens. Similarly, in the discipline of international relations, it is being stressed that world peace cannot be perpetuated through education stripped of morality. The project for this civilization has to be the restoration to man's life of morality and the sacred. Fukuyama's thesis of "The End of History" is a gross exaggeration, but the view that philosophy's end has come is gradually coming to be shared by post-modernist thinkers... However, according to Kuhn's epistemology, there never has been any "objective" science stripped of values. His ideas were taken further by Paul Feyeraband, who asserted that the choice of rival paradigms was tied to the aesthetic taste of the individual. While Popper's opposing views made widespread the idea that the theory of knowledge, the objectivity of which the West had boasted, was in fact in the service of the dominant ideology.[14]

Modernity's theory of knowledge, its epistemology, was basically born through defeating the secular paradigm of the discoveries of the 'positive' sciences. The works of Niels Bohr (theoretical physicist), James Lovelock (chemist), Rupert Sheldrake (plant biologist), and Ilya Prigogine (physico-chemist and Nobel Prize winner), and of other scientists, blew to pieces the chief concepts of the Newtonian mechanists and the Cartesian world view. I am not going into details, but Capra summarizes as follows the change in the culture of knowledge:

> "The sharp changes in the ideas and concepts which constitute physics and our present theories connected with matter, to the profound perceptions of the relations between the nature of matter and man's thought, brought about a radical change from the mechanistic view to the holistic and environmental world view. The world view foreseen by modern physics does not fit present society. It necessitates a completely different social and economic structure, a cultural revolution in the true meaning of the word."[15]

As may be seen from this, the new paradigm created by the studies in question offered as part of philosophy of knowledge which includes "intuition and intention." It should be emphasized that it is also reflected in the social sciences. Since it is related to our subject, the crossroads our teacher Rosenau arrived at in his ideas in the 1990's is important. He reduced the functioning of international relations to the analysis of a system based on physico-mathematical factors, and stated that the apparent disorganization of international relations resulted from the non-discovery of an underlying factor.

> "Although at first it appears nonsense to search for the order underlying the disorder of world events, the contradiction is solved when it is understood that there are

13. Quoted from, *Uzaktan Soruşturma* by Bulaç, Ali, *Din ve Modernizm*, Istanbul 1995, 265-6.
14. Feyerabend, Paul Karl, *Akla Veda* [Turk. trans: Başer, E.], Istanbul 1995. Also, Tuna, Korkut, *Batılı Bilginin Eleştirisi Üzerine*, Istanbul 1993.
15. Quoted from, Receb, İbrahim, "Sosyal Bilimlerde Teori Geliştirme Üzerine İslamî Yaklaşımlar," in *İslâmî Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 1/1 (Güz 1993), 19.

> two different concepts of order. In one of these, the concept of order indicates the hypothesis of causality, the idea that everything has a cause and that nothing comes into existence by chance. The causes may not be known at present, for the necessary technology, means, or time to observe them may not be existent, but the basic order hypothesis emerges not from empirical, but from theoretical possibilities. That is, when it is supposed that causal factors function rather than chance factors, nothing at all is theoretically incomprehensible. In this meaning, according to a simple and unproveable (but at the same time irrefutable) hypothesis, the world is an orderly place, even if it is bewildering and mysterious because means of observing it are inadequate to explain it. For this reason, in order to disallow the possibility of confusion, this basic order, which is tied to belief and organized to study, will be spoken of as Order 1."[16]

According to some people, the crisis of the theory of knowledge is the product of the post-modern times we are living in... if one considers the Western and particularly French philosophers, the world is experiencing "a loss of direction bordering on melancholy." We have lost our innocence and all the certainty of our values, and so the world has lost its all its warmth.[17] At this crossroads, man is experiencing "living in the ruins."[18] On looking from this angle, "it may be said that post-modernity characterizes passage from the certainties of a triumphant positive science to a generalized vagueness."[19] However, even if the left choose to interpret the post-modern stop of history as "the mental sport of puffed up liberal intellectuals chasing after something new, a burst of energy of some opportunists taking advantage of the defeat of socialism," or belittlingly, to say that it "carries out the wishes of late capitalism," there are not a few intelligent thinkers who say that "the similarities of this movement may be interpreted as the signs that there is an order of social development sufficient to make possible the building of an alternative world."[20] It is clear that to accept this view faces Western thought with an impasse. It is like this: with the scientific revolution the West sealed up the door on returning to the sacred. However, those who made nostalgic attempts to open the shutters of the doors were confronted by a corrupted religion and were to find the dark register of the Inquisition Church, which closed its eyes to science; and so they did not delay in admitting that it was not possible to repair it, and did not want even to say it was the nightmare of returning to the scholaticism of the dark middle ages. Thus, at this vital turning point is the horizon, the vision, the future, that Islam promises. Only, as Armağan rightly warned, due to the attractiveness of some of its parameters, post-modernity for Muslims should not lead to the facile idea of the media, that all that remains is an Islamic alternative.[21] For the Muslim Turks have a backyard which they are bound to clean up in the light of their own historicity.

16. Quoted from, Safi, Lüey, "Şeriat ve Sosyal Hadiselerden Neticeden Çıkarmak: Birleştirici Bir Yaklaşıma Doğru," in *İslâmî Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 3/2 (Yaz 1995), 63-4.
17. Stauth, G., ve Turner, B. S., "Nostalji Postmodernizm ve Kitle Kültürü Eleştirisi," in *Modernite Versus Postmodernite* [Ed. Küçük, Mehmet], 2nd. ed., Ankara 1994, 265.
18. Kellner, D., "Toplumsal Teori Olarak Postmodernizm: Bazı Meydan Okumalar ve Sorunlar," in *Ibid.* [Küçük], 236.
19. Jeanniere, A., "Modernite Nedir?", in *Ibid.* [Küçük], 23.
20. Küçük, Mehmet, Preface in *Ibid.*, 9, 300.
21. Armağan, M., *Gelenek ve Modernlik Arasında*, Istanbul 1995, 36.

iv) The 'story' of the 'Muslim' Turk intellectuals catching up with the times

It was impossible that these developments in the West should not have been reflected in the Islamic world, and particularly in Turkey. On the road leading from the Ottomans to the Republic, especially at the time opposition to Abdulhamid II's rule was increasing in Europe, it was in science that the Young Turks found the answer to the vital question "How can this state be saved?", and they thought that, duplicating exactly the European experience, they could achieve the utopia promised by Positivist thought. This was by replacing religion, which it saw as an obstacle to progress in society, with Positivist thought. At the time the 'Old Said's' efforts in Dersaadet (Istanbul) to have the Medresetü'z-Zehra opened in the backward East were sufficient reason to have him sent to the Toptaşı lunatic asylum, a Young Turk was saying: "Life consists of chemical and physical symbols qualified by reproduction and development (or becoming an organism)."[22] According to Hanioğlu, the fact that Positivism and biological materialism produced a discourse which was highly critical of the imperialist expansionism of Western Europe at the end of the 19th century, was very attractive to our intellectuals. "Also, the idea may have been influential that if Positivism, a non-Christian philosophy, came to be our official ideology, we could be tacked on to the Western world more easily."[23] However, at the first stages the Westernizing Young Turks did not want to attack Islam, probably because they were afraid they would be unable to cope with the social reaction! For this reason, Young Turks like Abdullah Cevdet tried to claim that early Islamic thinkers had been biological materialists. In fact they went even further and tried to prove that Islam itself was biological materialism.[24] It is interesting; the Young Turks also did not hold back from 'using' Islam as a means of opposing Sultan Abdulhamid's absolutist rule. They must have seen that the messages saying his rule clashed with Islam's political attitudes were shared by Islamic thinkers, among whom, at that time, was Said-i Nursi. He considered the entry of the Committee of Union and Progress into active politics in the 1908 revolution to be a natural and necessary result of their insistence of setting up science with religion, for the CUP had made it their policy to pursue the "levity" of this tactic, that is, their seeking allies among the Islamic *'ulama*.[25]

During the Second Constitutional Period, when if under the umbrella of Islamic Unity freedom could have saved the Islamic world from imperialism, and Said-i Nursi himself travelled among the tribes and nomads, offering them guidance, taking advantage of the liberty in the country, some Westernizing Young Turks, and foremost Abdullah Cevdet, started to try to prove openly that religion was no longer necessary and was unscientific.[26] It is clear from their

22. Hanioğlu, Ş., *Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Jön Türklük 1889-1902*, Istanbul 1985, 604.
23. Hanioğlu, Ş., *Milliyet*, 31/7/1995.
24. Hanioğlu, Ş., *Bir Siyasal Düşünür Olarak Dr. Abdullah Cevdet ve Dönemi*, Istanbul 1981, 130, 135.
25. Hanioğlu, Ş., *Jön Türkler*, 49.
26. Hanioğlu, Ş., *A. Cevdet*, 325.

own statements that being accused of irreligion did not worry our apostles of science unduly. Akıl Muhtar Bey said: "Thank goodness (not God!) my exams finished yesterday." While Ahmed Rıza Bey wrote as follows to his sister:

> "My Dear Sister Fahire,
>
> "One of the fine sayings of Hazret-i Muhammad are the wise words: 'Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave.' But since our damnable, ignorant imams and bigots have changed that important injunction into 'what is meant by knowledge is reading the Qur'an catechism,' although numerous famous scholars were produced at one time, that is, in Hazret Muhammad's time and afterwards, among the Arabs who were knowledgeable in sciences like geometry, algebra, astronomy, geography, and medicine, a thousand years later Muhammad's Community has declined to the extent it has to get the [Greek] grocer Yorgi's apprentice to tot up the shopping bill of a few pence. For no one picked up the many books the Western scholars had written about science. Knowledge was the *mızraklı* catechism, as I said above. Damn the catechisms' *mızrak*,. .... ! If I had been a woman, I would have chosen irreligion and not wanted to be a Muslim. I would have said I had better keep away from a religion that permits my husband to put three wives over me and as many concubines as he wishes, readies houris for him in Paradise, besides veiling my head and face like a mill pony bars me from having any fun, and always draws up laws favouring men and detrimental to women like my not being able to divorce my husband, and if he beats me, my not being able to say anything. How strange! This must be some sort of nervous disorder; once religion is made the subject, I can't control myself... It won't carry on like that; we were born too soon, or in the wrong country!"[27]

Having completed the repertoire of Positivist ideas with elitism, and social darwinism, and a sort of 'racialism', it is not be surprising that the Young Turks should have shown interest in an enquiry carried out by Gustave Le Bon among the customers of a famous Paris hatter. In his investigation, Le Bon learnt the size of the brains of one thousand two hundred of the hatter's customers from the numbers of the hats they wore. According to the classification he later did, it emerged that Parisian housemaids had the lowest average in regard to size, followed by other categories; it was understood finally that the size of the brains of scholars and writers were far larger than theirs![28]

Although the Young Turks' Positivism, and especially Abdullah Cevdet's publications in the journal *İctihad*, were the pretext of the Sharif of Mecca's revolt against the Ottomans in the First World War, that Westernizing writer brought the question of Kurdism to the forefront in the Armistice years, and considered the modernization of the Islamic world to be tied to applying reforms similar to Luther's, or in Ali Bulaç's words, "the Protestantization" of Islam.[29] Hanioğlu says this:

> "The idea of a Turkish society in which religion remained in the background was an important part of Abdullah Cevdet's 'utopia.' And this utopia, which we see

27. Quoted from, Hanioğlu, Ş., *Jön Türkler*, 47.
28. Hanioğlu, Ş., *Jön Türkler*, 614.
29. Hanioğlu, Ş., *A. Cevdet*, 335.

together with his thesis of Westernization, strongly resembles the official ideology of the Turkish Republic after 1923."[30]

It is understood that like Dr. Faust, who thought he could progress by selling his soul, the further it advanced down the road opened up by the Young Turks and their Westernizing imitators, contrary to what was hoped, the greater Turkey's failure to capture 'the renaissance' in science. Having gone off course, it is clear that so long as the Turks seek the social prescriptions for the problems that others have inflicted on them, and been imposed on them by those others, they will not be able to avoid meeting the unhappy fate which mankind prescribed for the Ottomans:

> "The Ottoman authorities realized that the technological potential of the Empire had gradually lagged far behind the scientific advances and successes of Europe and North America, and saw Western technology to be an important means of realizing their goals... Throughout their history, the Ottomans had known the use of the weapons and finally the aeroplanes created by the West, and carried the final defence of the Empire they had founded and expanded on horseback in the cabin of the aircraft. Only, it collapsed while they were getting astride of the times."[31]

To collapse as one lays hands on the age having expended all one's blood and energy seizing what has been impressed on one, that is, to be able to call oneself 'modern' ... it seems that this is the trap for those who cannot specify their own agenda... While the expansionist industrial society has another trap for those who set about applying their own prescriptions. As Abdulhamid II complained, not allowing "time to take breath enough to carry out reforms." Causing difficulty after difficulty in foreign policy and preoccupying the government, which is need of attention... We may come now to the present, and the "contemporary dimension" of the crisis. Hopefully, the frequent quotations will not bore the reader. Parviz Mansur depicted the present crisis of Islamic thought:

> "The Muslim's manner of existence today is not authentic. Outside the moments of happiness and Divine mercy while performing the sacred acts of his belief, the Muslim feels himself a stranger in the world. He is not a child of this age in respect of culture and civilization; he lives in either a nostalgic past or a utopian future; that he does not live in the present is certain. He has a view about reshaping the world, but he has no plan; he has a vision, but no reality; he has belief, but no power. The treacherous shadow of history has fallen between his final mission and his present situation. There is the abyss of impotence and brutality between his universal moral order and his temporary disorder."[32]

The Muslim intellectual's stance in the face of the coercive challenge of modernity's theory of knowledge is interesting: modern Western science is an extension of the science developed by Muslims between the 8th and 19th centuries, which for the most part passed into Europe via Spain, is it not? In which case, the overcoming of the backwardness of the 19th and 20th centuries should see

30. Hanioğlu, Ş., *A. Cevdet*, 341.

31. İhsanoğlu, E. ve Kaçar, M., [Eds.], *Çağını Yakalayan Osmanlı Devleti'nde Modern Haberleşme ve Ulaştırma Teknikleri*, Istanbul 1995, p. xvi. Emphases are the author's.

32. Serdar, Ziyaüddin, [Ed.], *Hilal Doğarken: İslâm'da Bilgi ve Çevrenin Geleceği*, Istanbul 1994, 98.

the return of science, which is anyway the "lost property" of Muslims, to its homeland. Only, we should not let its culture slip through the door into "our inviolable sanctuary" with it. Meanwhile, the symptoms will be experienced of some peoples' concern at having religion constantly approving science.[33] As Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi said: "It is to go to one extreme to consider the sciences to be apart from and independent of the Qur'an and religion; and it is to go to the other to make the Qur'an chase after the physical sciences and to look on it as a book of physics, chemistry, medicine, mathematics, or astronomy."[34] Moreover, when Western science began to be known in the Islamic world, those who looked coldly on it and kept their distance from it, were not few in number, as they are today. Almost as though they accept the duality foreseen by Cartesian philosophy, in order to flee from the consequences of the modernization of Islam or its Protestantization, some Muslim scholars put its historicity in the forefront even if it does not conform to the harmony of its essence, and clinging onto what they consider to be 'tradition,' concentrate on theology, and believe the sole licit means of defence is to cut themselves off entirely from the life of this world. Due to the educational philosophy of the Republic, which may be summarized as "single type education," the social sciences were ignored, and how striking it is that only on the threshold of the 21st century efforts to make single type education dominant have come on the agenda of Muslim scholars. This is a reflection of the epistemological crisis in the West, which we described above. Muslim intellectuals finally began to believe that they cannot hold science, a human activity, separate from man's other modes of thought, and that knowledge is a 'means of communication' reflecting and transmitting the philosophy and religious point of view of the culture that gave birth to it and spread it. Above all while the record of the West's scientificism is know, which has snowballed through its foreign policy and economic ambitions, for Muslims, the Islamization of knowledge has begun to be seen as a project the aim of which is to reinvest science with its universal dimensions.

v) The unstoppable rise of the Islamic paradigm

The story of Islamic science begins with the Palestinian Prof. Isma'il Faruqi's development of a detailed work-plan.[35] The plan had five main aims: a) to become conversant with today's social science disciplines; b) to have thorough knowledge of the Islamic legacy in this field; c) to establish relations between Islam and all the disciplines; d) to synthesize creatively Islamic values and the Islamic legacy with the modern social science disciplines; and e) to provoke a reawakening in Islamic thought. Faruqi explains step by step how these aims should be put into practice. From the first, the approach to the project could not save itself from criticism. Islamizing disciplines grafted with a materialist meta-

33. Kutluer, İlhan, *Bilimsellik Üzerine*, Istanbul 1983, 26. For a criticism of this stand, see, Serdar, Ziyaüddin, "İki Efendi Arasında: Kur'an mı, Yoksa Bilim mi?", in *İslâm Bilimi Tartışmaları* [Ed. Armağan, M.], Istanbul 1990, 197-206.

34. Şahin, M. Abdülfettah, *İnancın Gölgesinde*, İzmir 1992, ii, 131.

35. el-Faruki, İsmail Raci, *Bilginin İslâmilestirileşmesi: Genel İlkeler ve Çalışma Planı* [Turk. trans: Koru, F.], 3rd. ed., Istanbul 1995.

physic and secular morality appears the same as epistemological plastic surgery carried out to beautify the face. Moreover, would breathing the Islamic spirit into academic disciplines formed through "Western intellectual imperialism" Islamize science? Or just the opposite, would it, contrary to its aim, achieve the Westernization of Islam?[36] These reservations were taken into consideration in the creation of the Islamic paradigm. The contributions of writers like Nasr,[37] Attas,[38] Serdar,[39] and Açıkgenç[40] in the laying of the foundations of a sociology of Islamic knowledge in conformity with the understanding of the age, set out the difference in the methods and aims of Islamic science.

Islamic science does not reject research methods such as observation and experiment, but it does not limit itself with these means. It does not reject causality; it calls attention to the verticle cause, which in the final analysis is God's will in "the world of causes" (*'ālam al-asbāb*).[41] This says to a person: "So long as the prolific seeds spilling from your spirit are not scattered in your mind, the womb of our intellectual activities, no phenomenon frozen in the universe of man's five senses will produce the mysterious music of the harmony."[42] Man's spirit possesses an ability known by various names such as soul, heart, and intellect. When he is occupied with thought and comprehension it is called intellect, when he is doing something physical, soul, and when he accepts intuitive illumination, it is called heart.[43] In the tradition of Islamic science, the heart is the centre of the intellect and the basic means of the original knowledge which is a relative external reflection of intellectual activity. And "in reading" the universe, this takes us to the Divine source, that is, to revelation. "*The knowledge is with God.*"[44] Revelational knowledge, the Qur'an, is a reminder (*dhikr*). Looking at the signs (*āyāt*) and concepts (*asmā'*) in nature, man grasps what is written. According to the Islamic point of view, the aim of sound or authentic science is nothing other than raising the veil from knowledge, which is in any case existent with God. Man's reflective thought is the reflection of the knowledge which is in the heart in the field of the mind. That is to say, in the Qur'anic categorization, there is an order of knowledge (*'ilm*) in the form of revelation or its perfectly determined absolute part (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*); empiricism and intuition, that is, its part based on observation and experiment (*'ayn al-yaqīn*); and rationalism, or results obtained through reasoning (*'ilm al-yaqīn*). So long as the hierarchy is heeded, differences between scholars have been a mercy for the Umma, preventing the deviation of Islamic science's perspective, which is based on the affirmation of Divine unity.

36. This can be followed in the polemics in *İslâmî Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*.
37. Nasr, S. H., *Bir Kutsal Bilim Ihtiyacı* [Turk. trans: Yalçın, Ş.] Istanbul 1995.
38. el-Attas, N., *Modern Çağ ve İslâmî Düşünürün Problemleri* [Turk. trans: Kılıç, M. E.], Istanbul 1989; *İslâm ve Laisizm*, İstanbul 1994; Nor, Wan M., "al-Attas'ın Eğitim Felsefesi ve Metodolojisinin Genel Hatları" [Turk. trans: Ceylan, Y.], in *İslâmî Araştırmalar*, cviii/i, 1993-4.
39. See, fn. 33.
40. Açıkgenç, Alparslan, *Bilgi Felsefesi*, Istanbul 1992.
41. Nasr, S. H., "İslâmî Bilim," *İslâmî Araştırmalar*, 9-10.
42. Bulaç, Ali, *Kutsala, Tarihe ve Hayata Dönüş*, Istanbul 1995, 139.
43. Nor, Wan Muhammad, "al-Attas'ın...," *İslâmî Araştırmalar*, 42.
44. Qur'an, 46:23.

Man is the place of manifestation of knowledge and religion, and due to his being the Divine vicegerent on earth, is quite simply an axis bringing together the heavens and earth, and physical world and world of meaning. So long as he acquires his identity of being God's servant, he is the choicest being in the world and the most noble of creatures. He discovers knowledge and God's purpose in creation and he dedicates himself to that service. God's purpose is to bring man to spiritual maturity and perfection. This perfection is God's perfection, which becomes manifest in man, spreading its light in his heart and mind, and showing itself in his good works. The earth will in this way will be developed and set to rights, and with this spirit men will find the opportunity to live as brothers, and evils will cease and good will prevail.[45] That is to say, in Islamic sociology there is no evolution there is being perfected (*tekâmül*), and the Qur'an sees the progression of man and history as verticle, and foresees change and motion "from the lowly to the exalted."

It is clear what will be done in this context: if the Islamic world remains on its feet, it must become thoroughly acquainted with modern science, criticize it in the light of Islamic teachings, and creating a paradigm drawn from Islamic sources, open a new page in the history of Islamic science, the foundations of which are the traditions of Islamic science with its history and philosophy revivified. In other words, it has not to pursue its reactionary obduracy with the peevishness of the West, but surpass the suffocating dominance and spellbinding effect of modernity's secular paradigm. This is for the salvation of mankind, as well as for that of the Umma. Thus, this moral aspect present in the nature of Islamic science is attracting attention and applause in the West as well. For they have been plunged into disaster by their scientific model, have they not, which is amoral and devoid of values? Muslim scholars have covered considerable distance in forming an alternative to the Western scientific model, despite the varying tones when they started. But it is still too soon to say that this Islamic paradigm has won complete acceptance.

vi) Grafting Bediuzzaman's methodology onto the ethical epistemology

If advances in science do not batter the assumptions of mechanical evolution, and if on the one hand the criticisms of the post-modernists in the West, and on the other the vast changes brought about in mankind by the information age, the door of which was opened by the communications revolution, do not force mankind which is coming together like a river in flood to the consciousness of global change — I don't know, perhaps we would still have thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi as an heroic defender of Islam, as the *mujtahid* of the age, living at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century when Positivism had resolved to take Turkish society into mental captivity. We would not have known the reason he expounded the Qur'an as a whole rather than verse by verse. It really seems to me that if the Risale-i Nur is considered within the

45. Mardin, Ömer Fevzi, *Allah'ın Hilkatde Muradı*, Istanbul 1952, 6-7.

process of passing beyond —through the theory of knowledge— modernity, which has ceased being a crisis for Muslims only and become the shared crisis of mankind, as is now accepted by the West, Bediuzzaman's *ijtihad* concerning the future will become apparent, or rather that he was struggling with the epistemological bases of the information society. It is a question of our deciphering what he wrote and reaching the intellectual and intuitive point where it can be used in the reconstruction of Islamic knowledge.

Did Bediuzzaman not state as though seeing the Age of Information, "At the end of time mankind will pour into science and learning. It will find all its power in science. Rule and power will pass to the hand of science"?[46] Bediuzzaman put forward in the Risale-i Nur solutions for the points which today so many Muslims scholars research or on which they get caught up working to create an Islamic paradigm and framework of this sort in which the social sciences may be reflected. For example, of the above discussions, we might mention the problem of the method involved in the question of 'the intellect' and 'the heart'. Here, Bediuzzaman says that Muslims follow proof; they comprehend the truths of belief (universe) through their intellects, thought, and hearts. For this reason,

> "In the future, when reason, science, and learning prevail, that will certainly be the time that the Qur'an will gain ascendancy, which relies on reasoned proofs and makes the intellect confirm its pronouncements."[47]

Only the science brought from Europe and America, which was 'discovered' with the intellect, has to be illuminated with "the light of *tawhid* (Divine unity)." In his words, they

> "...should be regarded in the light of the reflective thought and significative meaning the Qur'an speaks of, that is, in the name of the one who made and fashioned them."
>
> "Knowledge is that which is established in the heart. If it is purely intellectual, it does not become one with man."[48]

The harmonious synthesis between them is indicated by this concise measure:

> "The light of the conscience are the sciences of religion. The light of the reason are sciences of civilization. The truth is manifested through the combining of the two. The students' endeavour takes flight on those two wings. When they are separated, it gives rise to bigotry in the former, and trickery and scepticism in the latter."[49]

Concerning the questions of God's purpose in creation, man's aim, our theory of 'being perfected,' and in this context the basic problems of Islamic science, I reckon the quotes below are clear enough not to require any further explanation:

> "The creation of the world is subject to the law of being perfected. As for man, since he is the one of the parts and fruits of the world, there is in him too an inclination to be perfected and a desire for progress. This inclination grows and

46. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Sözler*, Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1980, 246 / *The Words* [English trans.], Sözler Publications 1993, 272.
47. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Hutbe-i Şâmiye*, 23 / *The Damascus Sermon* [Eng. trans.], Sözler Publications 1996, 32.
48. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Hakikat Çekirdekleri*, 2 / *Letters*, 541.
49. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Münâzarat*, 78. See also, *Mektûbat*, 487.

> flourishes through the assistance of the meeting of minds and conjunction of ideas. The conjunction of ideas expands through the sources of perfectedness. And the sources of perfectedness fertilize the seeds of the physical sciences from the loins of creation in the ground of the nursery of the times. The seeds grow and develop through gradual experience."[50]
>
> "Man came into this world to be perfected through knowledge and supplication. In respect of nature and potentiality, everything is tied to knowledge. And the basis, source, light, and spirit of all true sciences are knowledge of God, and their uttermost essence, belief in God."[51]
>
> "The lofty aim of the universe is man's universal worship in the face of the manifestation of dominicality. And man's ultimate aim is to attain to that worship by means of his sciences and perfections."[52]

Up to here have been noted, with examples, the contributions of Bediuzzaman's methodology to the epistemology of Islamic science. I want to suffice with a single quote in connection with its application to the social disciplines, for it holds up a light to international relations, my own field. I ask that you recall Camus' anger at the beginning of my paper. The philosophy of modernity is summarized as follows on page 119 of *Sözler* [*The Words*, page 146]:

> "Philosophy accepts 'force' as its point of support in the life of society. It considers its aim to be 'benefits.' The principle of its life it recognizes to be 'conflict.' It holds the bond between communities to be 'racialism and negative nationalism.' And its fruits are 'gratifying the appetites of the soul and increasing human needs.' However, the mark of force is 'aggression.' The mark of benefit —since they are insufficient for every desire— is 'jostling and tussling.' While the mark of conflict is 'strife.' And the mark of racialism —since it is to be nourished by devouring others— is 'aggression.' It is for these reasons that it has negated the happiness of mankind."

Morgenthau's realism, the international rivalry that has continued up to the present, could have been described only in that way. So what should it be like, the web of the branches of science of the international community, which are bound to be "normalized"? The answer is in the paragraph following the quote:

> "As for the Qur'anic wisdom, its point of support is 'truth' instead of force. It takes 'virtue and God's pleasure' as its aims in place of benefits. It takes the principle of 'mutual assistance' as the principle of life in place of the principle of conflict. And it takes 'the ties of religion, class, and country' to be the ties bonding communities. Its aim is to form a barrier against the lusts of the soul, urge the spirit to sublime matters, satisfy the high emotions, and urging man to the human perfections, make him a true human being. Then the mark of 'truth' is accord. The mark of virtue is 'solidarity.' The mark of mutual assistance is 'hastening to assist one another.' The mark of religion is 'brotherhood' and 'attraction.' And the mark of reining in and tethering the soul and leaving the spirit free and urging it towards perfection is 'happiness in this world and the next.'"

When the lines of the problematic are put like that, the aim of science, and in

50. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Muhakemat*, Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1977, 13-14.
51. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *İman ve Küfür Müvazeneleri*, 96.
52. *Sözler*, 246 / *The Words*, 272.

international relations, is understood to be a sort of '*tawhid* engineering.' When it is realized, neither the Serbs, nor Serbification, will be possible. For sure, it is tied to peace at home and abroad. Although the above quote is of a universal nature, harmony in the exercise of freedom and peace in internal politics are gathered together in the light of Bediuzzaman's words, analyzed by my friend Ibrahim Ethem Deveci, in the book: *Ben Dindar Bir Cumhuriyetçiyim* (I am a religiously-minded republican).

—Me too, sir, me too!

* * *

The Thought of Said Nursi: A Contemporary Approach

Muhammad Rushdi 'Ubayd

A person who studies the Risale-i Nur methodically and comprehensively will be faced with a very clear fact: in the work, which the author wrote to instruct, guide, and train people, he follows ways of expounding the questions of Islamic thought in depth, and in a broad-based and detailed manner. At the same time, he has concise views concerning the reconstruction of the Islamic personality, the carrying out of the responsibilities which fall on the reconstructed Islamic Umma, and the saving of Muslims in Turkey from the contemporary intellectual dangers threatening their belief, honour, society, and community. The original ideas and solutions derived from the Qur'an and Sunna Bediuzzaman put forward, which were based on a new approach and contemporary considerations, still preserve their warmth. Followers of the Risale-i Nur and those wishing to be informed of these solutions, and the modern content of his thought, will find this paper will illuminate them.

Although for the most part the Risale-i Nur comprises Bediuzzaman's views of questions based on his own interpretations (*ijtihādī*), and reflects the characteristics of the time and place in which he lived, and the psychological, social and scholarly conditions of the period in which it was written, it still preserves its vitality and power. The prime reasons for this are its being based on the Holy Scripture of the Qur'an and its answering exactly the needs of ordinary people and the questions they ask.

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Sometimes Bediuzzaman addresses his own self and tries to strengthen it through belief; sometimes he talks with his students, training and instructing them; sometimes he calls out to believing Muslims who have been influenced by the ideas of misguidance; and sometimes he devotes himself to the problems facing society and whole Umma. It may be said that these are the bases on which he constructed the ideas he put forward in the Risale-i Nur. Without doubt, these principles are extremely important for the Islamic Umma and humanity in so far as they offer new messages. On the other hand, Bediuzzaman was not alone in expending all his attention and energy on establishing these principles; many thinkers in every corner of the Islamic world put forward similar ideas, despite their living under different conditions and their expressing their solutions in different terms.

We may list the most important of the principles I shall discuss in detail in this paper under the following headings:

1. Establishing belief on firm foundations.
2. Explaining the characteristics of the Islamic Shari'a, and rebuffing doubts raised about it.
3. Comparisons of Western civilization and Islamic civilization.
4. Understanding the natural laws and calling on people to benefit from them.
5. Encouragement to study the empirical sciences.
6. Encouragement to do work in material fields.
7. Call to Islamic Unity.
8. The conformation of original values and contemporary values.
9. The correction of the moral character of the Muslim individual.
10. The development of the aesthetic sense in Muslims.

Finally, noting that this paper is in conformity with the Holy Qur'an, the *Sunna*, and Divine pleasure, I beseech God Almighty that He accept it and that He will open the hearts of His righteous servants to it. I have no other wish save that He forgive me, for He is free of all fault, all error.

I request of my readers that they accept what they find to be right in this paper, and that they refer any errors to me.

> *And God says the Truth, and He shows the [right] way.* (33:4)
>
> *And the close of their prayer will be, "All praise be God, the Sustainer of all the Worlds."*(10:10)

1. Establishing belief on firm foundations

Bediuzzaman's statement that "the greatest danger facing the people of Islam at this time is their hearts being corrupted and belief harmed through the misguidance that arises from science and philosophy"[1] is extremely apt and to the point. The appositeness of his view here and the fineness of his diagnosis become clear if one takes into consideration the deep wounds caused to the belief of the Muslim individual by aggressive philosophy, and its negative consequences. This

1. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Lem'alar*, 104 / *The Flashes Collection* [English trans.] Sözler Publications 1995, 143.

aggression is seriously affecting life especially in countries where secularism dominates all intellectual and social matters as an all-embracing social system. But in fact, all mankind is faced with the 'ban on thought' current philosophy has placed on man's reason and conscience. Roger Garaudy has said the following concerning this matter: "Since the current understanding of science, which is a by-product of present-day philosophical thought, instils ideas in conformity with its own aims, that is, in a way distant from scholarly wisdom and faith, and provides no answer to the question 'why?', and does not question the ultimate aims, limits, and principles of things, it is driving mankind to suicide."[2] Garaudy explains man's need for belief as taught by Islam in this way:

> "Up to this time, no need was felt for the revival of this concept, which does not separate science from wisdom and belief, or for the spreading of it, or for the reason to grasp it perfectly. This is a sign that a new era is being entered upon in the life of mankind."[3]

The existence of this need is corroborated in many works written by Western writers, thinkers, and philosophers at the present time which have reached the Islamic world by means of translations.[4] The fact that in the Qur'an and *Sunna*, belief is emphasized as the indispensable mark of Islam is one of the reasons for a number of well-known persons in the West embracing Islam. The German Dr. Murad Hoffman, who is a Muslim and author of the book 'Islam is the Guide,' says this:

> "Science gives rise to innumerable questions, and cannot provide clear answers to the new questions that daily increase like a flood. This sort of natural science which is based on experiment and is far from religion, is powerless to fill the vacuum left by religion and particularly from making clear the purposes of things which religion explains and takes man to by natural means. The idea of leaving aside religion is a recent, narrow approach. This has been shown clearly by the collapse of Darwinism, which for a time ruled supreme, and the decline of Freud, Marx and the early Materialists."[5]

Long before the admission that science is limited,[6] and of the need for belief in the Unseen, and before freedom from the chains of science's arrogance was won, Said Nursi emphasized Qur'anic belief, which disperses the clouds of doubt and scepticism darkening the worlds of Muslim individuals. He insisted on the necessity for belief in God Almighty, His Most Beautiful Names, His Godhead and dominicality, the holy scriptures He has sent, His prophets and messengers, the Day of Judgement, the hereafter, and in the angels. Expounding Qur'anic verses connected with these in a way suitable to the present age, and giving examples, in the Risale-i Nur he established the bases of belief in the hearts and minds of Muslims.

2. Garaudy, Roger, *al-Islām fi'l-Gharb* (Arabic trans.), 11.
3. Garaudy, *al-Islām fi'l-Gharb* 12.
4. For further information, see, Agros, Robert M. *Kitāb al-'Ilm fī Manẓūrat al-Jadīd*; Stansio, George N., *Iṣdār 'Ālam al-Ma'rifa*, Kuwait 1989; Forestia, Jan, *Ma'āyīr al-Fikr al-'Ilmī*, Beirut 1984; Debor, Renier, *Insāniyya al-Insān* (Nobel Prize), Beirut 1979; Boucaille, Maurice, *Darāsat al-Kutub al-Muqaddasa fī Ḍau' al-Ma'ārif al-Jadīda*, Beirut 1977; and others.
5. Hoffman, Murad, *al-Islām ka-Badīl*, 75, 76.
6. Solfian, G., *Ḥudūd al-'Ilm*, Beirut 1972.

Bediuzzaman was of the opinion that those with 'imitative belief' (*taklidî iman*) would have insufficient strength to resist the doubts raised by materialist and secular philosophy. It is clear that if belief is lacking in rational proofs and scholarly arguments, it will be easily overcome by the powerful and effective assaults of doubts arising from these. For this reason, using the term "true, verified belief" (*iman-ı tahkikî*) instead of "imitative belief," Bediuzzaman called for belief to be increased, renewed, and strengthened. Doubtless, belief banishes imitation, for it should be founded on the Qur'anic —reasoned— understanding. These terms show the influence of sufism as depicted in the works of Imam-ı Rabbani (Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi) in particular.

Said Nursi explains the need for belief, and describes its effects on man's self, thought, life, social life, history, and Divine Determining (*kader*).

The believer gains distinction through his view of the world, which is coloured by the beauty of belief. If he is one of "the heedless who have deviated into misguidance," he will see the world to be "a ghastly, fearsome place of non-existence and a grievous, ruined graveyard."[7] While the believer's view of the world is "in the form of living instructive pages, strange worlds, living and endowed with spirits, and existent realms of the Sustainer which are connected with us."[8]

Qur'anic belief has been defined as "the meanings being unfolded to [man] of the unsolved, abstruse questions 'Where do this flood of beings and caravan of creatures come from and where will they go? Why have they come and what are they doing here?' And the fact that these can be answered only through the mystery of Divine unity (*tawḥīd*)."[9]

The incomparable Qur'anic view of the universe which belief obtains for the believer is as follows: the verse *And there is nothing but it extols Him with praise, but you understand not their glorifying*[10] teaches true, luminous, pleasurable wisdom to men, jinns, and angels, who communicate with each other and hasten to assist each other. It states that the universe is a collection of beings who are glorifying their Maker with thanks and praise. At the same time, belief saves man from seeing the world as empty, grievous, desolate, purposeless, and abounding in perils and enemies.

For "the heedless and misguided," the lengthy past is "a grievous, ruined graveyard,"[11] while for the believer, the Qur'an presents history as living and instructive. "With an elevated miraculousness, the Qur'an of Miraculous Exposition sometimes conveys us to those times, and sometimes brings those times to us, showing them to every century and class of people..."[12] Bediuzzaman's view of history is similar to the Qur'an's view. The Muslim may turn to history and

7. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Sözler*, İstanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1980, 422 / *The Words* (English trans.) Sözler Publications 1993, 466.
8. *Sözler*, 422 / *The Words*, 466.
9. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Şualar*, İstanbul, Çeltut Matbaası 1960, 11.
10. Qur'an, 17:44.
11. *Sözler*, 422 / *The Words*, 466.
12. *Sözler*, 422 / *The Words*, 466.

strengthen the ties between it and him, he may bring before his eyes its events, take instruction from them, and taking as examples those who acted well and properly, become the follower of heroic and worthy figures.

Bediuzzaman also brings to light the blessing of belief in man's mental life, for this belief changes the way man considers Divine Determining. A person who is not a believer is frightened or even terrified of it, and his seeing the darkness of the future causes him distress and a sense of suffocation in his spirit. Whereas belief in Divine Determining "affords a light and joy which produce a lightness, ease, spirit, and sustenance, and ensure confidence and security."[13]

Belief also provides a solution for the way man regards suffering; it adjusts the emotions he feels in the face of pains, and gains a balanced view for him. It enables ordinary believers to see the wisdom in suffering and to ponder over its results in relation to the universe and life, and to understand that

> "...certain things happen to living creatures in the form of griefs, calamities, difficulties, and tribulations whereby the lights of existence are renewed in their lives, and the darkness of non-existence draws distant and their lives are purified."[14]

In this way, in respect of morality, belief, and psychologically, no area remains where pain can have an effect.

> "Because arrest, repose, silence, idleness, rest, and monotony, are in quality and as conditions all non-existence. Even the greatest pleasure is reduced to nothing by monotony."[15]

The result of belief in respect of morality lies in its repulsing pain and bringing about "devlopment," its making a person aware of "the relative truths" and leading them to understand "the impresses of the Most Beautiful Names,"[16] and to achieve the aims of belief.

Bediuzzaman defines the acquisition of knowledge with these words:

> "From the point of view of the affirmation of Divine unity, the hundreds of thousands of sorts and kinds of Divine beauty and perfection become seen, understood, known, and realized in the particular beings at the extremities of the sphere of multiplicity, for they are concentrated in them."[17]

Bediuzzaman warns that the mind of a person who deviates into misguidance and falls into unbelief and associating partners with God will be "an inauspicious instrument of torture which gathers in man's head all the grievous pains of the past and awesome fears of the future."[18] Whereas belief cures this mental torment with virtues of the heart like patience, thankfulness, contentment, certainty, reliance on God, and bowing to His commands and the meanings of the affirmation of Divine unity. When belief is absent, pity and compassion become two sources of pain. For those who do not believe, the events visited on humanity

13. *Sözler*, 440 / *The Words*, 486.
14. *Sözler*, 441 / *The Words*, 487.
15. *Sözler*, 441 / *The Words*, 487.
16. *Sözler*, 441 / *The Words*, 487.
17. *Şualar*, 8.
18. *Şualar*, 14.

and other living creatures all appear to be torment, evil, and death, causing him pain and suffering.

> "The past, a vast grave; the future, darkness; above, terror; and from below and the left and right, grievous, sorrowful situations and numberless dangerous things..."[19]

The emotion of love is the same; on seeing the transience of things, it is stained. But when the believer discovers the mystery of the affirmation of Divine unity, he may understand fully the mysteries and wisdom of evil, death, and decline.

Looked at through belief, evil is a partial, accidental state not devoid of wisdom. Death is "the introduction to eternal life."[20] The transience of things is "like images in the cinema or bubbles flowing in the sunlight, a renewal and replacement which causes pleasure."[21]

Bediuzzaman discusses the role of belief in society, defending his view that it ensures and strengthens the bonds of social life. For "the unity of belief necessitates the unity of hearts, and the oneness of our creed demands also the oneness of our society."[22]

Belief illumines the believer's heart with the light of the Qur'an, which illuminates the conscience, increases insight, burnishes social consciousness, and scatters darkness and distress. In this way, broad horizons, both cosmic and social, are opened up before him. Especially from the social point of view, he observes "the innumerable ties of unity" between humanity. He therefore gains an understanding whereby he looks on people as his brothers, with love, respect, and kindness:

> "The believer loves and should love his brother, and is pained by any evil he sees in him. He attempts to reform him not with harshness but gently."[23]

In the Risale-i Nur, comparisons are made between the way a denier and a believer look at life and its difficulties, and at various events. The former does not see the concealed purposes of life and the universe, and does not believe in them:

> "He transforms this wondrous, living, absolutely obedient, corporeal angel into a lifeless, soulless, transitory, unemployed, perishing, meaningless futile collection of beings, revolving in a chaos of meaningless events amid storms of change in the darkness of non-existence. And he transforms this marvellous, absolutely orderly, beneficial factory into a plaything of unconscious chance, which is without product or result, and is idle, unemployed, and in a state of confusion: a playground of deaf nature and blind force; a place of sorrow and mourning for all conscious creatures."[24]

Whereas the believer sees everything as "a valuable miracle of power and

19. *Şualar,* 15.
20. *Şualar,* 15.
21. *Şualar,* 15.
22. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Mektûbat,* İstanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1981, 243 / *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi —Letters 1928-1932* [English trans.] Sözler Publications 1994, 313.
23. *Mektûbat,* 243 / *Letters* 312.
24. *Şualar,* 11-12.

proclamation of wisdom which displays the Maker's art in attractive fashion to innumerable admirers."[25] In his view, all beings are each "a well-ordered, meaningful, Divine ode which innumerable conscious beings study in perfect delight."[26]

2. Rebuffing the doubts raised about Islam

Bediuzzaman understood the need to defend the Shari'a of Islam against the attacks levelled at it, and the accusations of rigidity, faultiness, deficiency, and backwardness. This was not the defence of something accused of acting contrary to right, it was the defence of a lawyer trying to explain the truth to those who, due to their ignorance, heedlessness, or not appreciating its true worth, imagined to be deficiences what in fact were their own inadequate understandings. For Islam is a perfect and complete way which orders the intellectual and psychological lives of Muslims in conformity with their "dominical colouring." It is a source to which Muslims may have recourse in all their matters and works. At the same time, it is "the instructor of their minds, the illuminator of their hearts, the trainer and purifier of their souls."[27]

The Shari'a of Islam is known for "its very precise laws"[28] and its justice, for it is "established on truth and justice."[29] It is an historical fact, because "for fourteen centuries it has brought together one fifth of mankind, despite their being from different peoples."[30] At the same time, it is elevated, differing from present-day civilization in respect of foundation and source. Islam is based on the Qur'an, and the Qur'an comes from God. The genius of Rome lies at the base of present-day civilization; it looks to the instinctual soul and the body, it plunges into 'nature,' cultivates the soul, and shows up Satanic features in man.[31] Differently to other systems, Islam defends the "principle of independence and self-sufficiency."[32] It is an eternal Shari'a which challenges transitoriness. The Qur'an "preserves it freshness and youth as though newly revealed every century... The works and laws of man grow old like man. They change and make way for others. But the Qur'an's rulings and laws are so firm and well-established that they increase in strength as the centuries pass."[33]

A further distinguishing mark of the Qur'an is

> "The perfect order, balance, beauty of proportion, and soundness of the Greater Shari'a of Islam, which has emerged from the decisive statements, senses, indications, and allusions of the comprehensive Qur'an; they form an irrefutable, decisive proof, and just witness that cannot be doubted."[34]

25. *Şualar,* 13.
26. *Şualar,* 12-13.
27. *Mektûbat,* 199 / *Letters,* 259.
28. *Mektûbat,* 199 / *Letters,* 258.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. *Sözler,* 666.
32. Ibid.
33. *Sözler,* 378 / *The Words,* 419-20.
34. *Sözler,* 126 / *The Words,* 154.

If one thinks of how far man-made systems and the religions man has corrupted are from being able to secure in balanced fashion the things beneficial for individuals and society, one may understand the importance of the Shari'a of Islam, which the Qur'an laid down.

While explaining these subjects, Bediuzzaman described the wisdom in Islamic dress for women, the injunction to pay *zakāt* and prohibition on usury and interest, inheritance portions for male and female children and similar subjects, demonstrating that the Qur'anic injunctions are "pure truth and justice."[35]

Bediuzzaman treated subjects related to the tenets of faith with the same sensitivity, dispelling doubts on matters such as Adam and Eve being expelled from Paradise, the existence of Satan, good men and innocent creatures perishing in natural disasters, etc.

Bediuzzaman pointed out that some sufis had confused the concepts of the sufi path (*tarīqa*) and Shari'a, saying:

> "The Shari'a is directly, without shadow or veil, the result of the Divine address, through the mystery of Divine Oneness in respect of absolute dominicality. The highest degrees of the Sufi path and path of reality (*ḥaqīqa*) are like parts of the Shari'a. Or they are always like the means, introduction, and servant. Their results are the incontrovertible matters of the Shari'a."[36]

Bediuzzaman warns the people of the path, saying...

> "The sufi path and way of reality should not exceed being means. If they become the ultimate aim, then the incontrovertible teachings and actions of the Shari'a and following the Practices of the Prophet (PBUH) become as though official, while the heart is turned beyond them."[37]

He says that on this way it is necessary to give up pride, egotism, ostentation, seeking the attention of people, and worldly expectations. He insists on the necessity of "following the Noble Practices (*Sunna*) of the Prophet,"[38] and warned communities which concentrated on the purification of the instinctive soul and working of the heart against the danger of their restricting to their own group "the introvertible actions of the Shari'a and conduct of the Prophet's *Sunna*."[39] He described as follows the consequences if these are not taken into consideration:

> "Such a person thinks of his circle for the remembrance of God, rather than the obligatory prayers; he is drawn more to his recitations and supplications than to his religious obligations; he is more concerned with avoiding offending against the rules of behaviour of the sufi path than avoiding grievous sins. Whereas the recitations of the sufi path cannot be the equivalent of the obligatory acts which are the incontestible matters of the Shari'a; they cannot take their place."[40]

Bediuzzaman states that there is no way of reaching reality outside the *Sunna*

35. *Mektûbat*, 37 / *Letters*, 59.
36. *Mektûbat*, 423 / *Letters*, 528.
37. *Mektûbat*, 423 / *Letters*, 529.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.

of the Prophet and injunctions of the Shari'a.[41] Moreover, some of the perfected saints were executed with the sword of the Shari'a. But ecstatics and those immersed in Divine contemplation, who are of this class, should not

> "...display any denial, insult, or contempt towards the truths of the Shari'a and rules of belief. Even if they do not carry out the injunctions, they have to know that they are right. But if they are overcome by that state and assume a position... which infers denial and giving the lie to those incontestible truths, it is the sign that they have fallen from the path!"[42]

For me, there is a difficulty in this matter, for as Bediuzzaman stresses, the Shari'a is a perfect system for all mankind and a source of healing and guidance, so to show that it is lacking these things and that certain individuals are directly the source of these qualities is a contradiction.

Bediuzzaman reduced the extent of the opposition he encountered and put forward certain conditions. Firstly, he did not permit that such opposition be equated with the complete denial of revelation. So long as as it did not comprise "any denial, insult, or contempt towards the truths of the Shari'a," it was not dangerous. If in states such as ecstasy in which man's will is negated, his mental balance is shaken, and errors are committed either through ignorance or lack of comprehension of the laws of the Shari'a, and mental and psychological health is impaired —if in these situations a person opposes the Shari'a because his will, consciousness, knowledge, and power are ineffective, and he does not display acceptance of the truths and injunctions of the Shari'a, then for him and such people, "it is a sign they have fallen from the path."[43]

> "They are carried away by the brilliant pleasures of the sufi path and way of reality, and since they cannot attain to the pleasures of the truths of the Shari'a, which are far more elevated, they suppose them to be dull formalities and are indifferent towards them... They say: 'I have found it; it is enough for me,' and act in a way contrary to the injunctions of the Shari'a. Those in their right minds are responsible; they stray from the path, indeed, become the playthings of Satan to an extent."[44]

3. Comparison between Western civilization and Islamic civilization

Bediuzzaman had a new understanding of Western civilization. He accepted that it contained "many virtues," but rejected claims that it had achieved the present situation single-handed; he said that it was not free of secondary elements and that the whole world had had a share in its making, and it was therefore the property of all mankind.[45]

The four clearest factors which had had a role in the making of Western civilization are as follows:

41. *Mektûbat*, 423-4 / *Letters*, 529.
42. *Mektûbat*, 424 / *Letters*, 529-30.
43. *Mektûbat*, 424 / *Letters*, 530.
44. Ibid.
45. *Sözler*, 666.

The first was the factor of time, which had given rise to "the conjunction of ideas" or "meeting of minds,"[46] and "the accumulation of ideas."

The second was the factor of man, who made possible the bringing together and exchange of ideas between people.[47]

The third was the factor of faith or belief, which was described by Bediuzzaman as "the revealed sacred laws and particularly the Shari'a of Muhammad (PBUH), that is, the revolution of Islam."[48] (Arnold Toynbee called this "the spiritual spark.")

The fourth was the human element, for which he used the term "the innate needs of man."[49]

Some fair-minded Western thinkers agree that Western civilization is the product of all humanity. One of these is Roger Garaudy, who deals with the subject in many of his writings, mentioning that Islamic civilization was among the elements making up Western civilization. Garaudy says this:

> "Certain methods of experimentation and an awesome number of discoveries are not the only things the Islamic world gained for us, it also gained the methods of experiment which open the window onto nature and at the same time to dominating humanity, as well as wisdom, that is, the ability to study the purposes of things, and to form a tie between between the limits and principles of science and the limits of present technologies."[50]

Bediuzzaman's view on the formation of civilization is the same as that of Malik b. Nabi al-Jaza'iri. He was a thinker who stated that civilization comprises three elements: man, earth, and time. He also speaks of "religious thought, which unites the three elements."[51] Differently to Bediuzzaman, we see that this writer lays emphasis on 'earth,' that is, on material civilization.

When discussing the values of the present-day civilization, Bediuzzaman said that its training and education, the origins of which lie in Greek philosophy, should not be adopted. For it takes "likening oneself to the Necessary Being"[52] as the unattainable human goal,[53] and is the cause of the pride, arrogance, claims to godhead, and excessive egotism of Western man, and has blocked up for humanity the way of pure worship, performed solely for God.[54] As for Islam, it points out pride and saves man from worshipping his soul and desires and neglecting the worship of his Sustainer, and from taking his own desires as God and worshipping his reason, and calls him to a form of worship which will take him to the very peak of freedom.

Said Nursi's criticism of the bases of Western thought and education is a

46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Garaudy, *al-Islām fi'l-Gharb*, 217.
51. Mālik b. Nabī, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍ*, 64,
52. *Sözler*, 507 / *The Words*, 563.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.

reflection of his fine understanding of Islamic thought and education, and is based on the profound analyses he made of Western civilization. He said that Western civilization was achieved on abandoning Church culture. Man was accepted as the measure for everything, for every sort of value and material and spiritual principle. It tried to conquer non-Western societies with the idea of racialism. It took as its aim, base self-interest in place of virtue. The law of life was conflict in place of mutual assistance. Its greatest work was stimulating the desires and appetites, and urging to vice those who want to satisfy these. In the field of economics, it gave rise to monopolies, while in foreign politics it led to the emergence of colonialism. In internal politics it favoured a Machiavellian way of thought. It encouraged irreligion in scholarship, atheism in beliefs, and in the arts and sciences every sort of excess. In addition, we may count among the works of Western civilization the moral anarchy and social divisions which are widespread in Western society. As Garaudy has said, the movement for progress in the 16th century was a rebellion against God. It had at source this internal logic and basic understanding: "Through the power of reason —given by the Godhead— man can be lord and master over all the realms of creation."[55] But unfortunately, "at the end of the 20th century five centuries after the movement for progress which started in Italy in the 16th century, we are face to face with a bankruptcy which threatens all mankind and encompasses every field." And now, "it has become essential that we reconsider in radical fashion the principles at the root of that progress and the bases of the civilization we have created with our own hands."[56]

Long before Garaudy invited people to tax their brains over the bases of Western civilization, Bediuzzaman discussed man's worldly existence and the bases of Western philosophy, which is thought to be the sole measure in the creation of thought and values.

Said Nursi denied that the human reason, which is in every way deficient, limited as regards knowledge, and inclines to what it can acquire quickly, can be a just, sound, and accurate judge of ideas and other things. Although among beings man possesses "the most extensive will" and power of choice,[57] he cannot live independently of all other things. Because his innate capacity plays a role in directing and forming his power, in giving a particular direction to the changes in the world, and resisting and removing things which oppose him in the universe. Moreover, all man possesses is "the power of a minute particle, a fine thread-like will, a fleeting flash-like consciousness, a fast extinguishing flame-like life, a life which passes in a minute."[58] Whenever he tries to exist abstaining from the worship of God and removed from His way of guidance, and orders his thought and life in such a way, he immediately finds himself at the unsurmountable walls of Divine Determining and ramparts of the Unseen, even if he attempts all means within the bounds of his infinitesimal knowledge. "When smitten by disaster,

55. Garaudy, *al-Islām fi'l-Gharb*, 249.
56. Ibid.
57. *Lem'alar*, 116 / *The Flashes*, 162.
58. *Lem'alar*, 118 / *The Flashes*, 163.

they can await no salve for their pain other than from deaf, blind causes." For mankind fallen into this situation, day has been transformed into night.

> "And in order to warm that dark, distressing, unquiet night, you have only illuminated them with deceptive, temporary lamps. Those lamps do not smile with joy in the face of mankind, they rather smirk idiotically at their pitiful and lamentable state. Those lights mock and make fun of them."[59]

Said Nursi offers a descriptive example of a person raised by this civilization, deprived by it of intellectual salvation. The person remains bewildered between two opposing and conflicting understandings. In his view,

> "... all living beings are miserable and calamity-stricken, subject to the assaults of oppressors. The world is a place of universal mourning. The sounds in the world are the cries and wails arising from death and suffering. The pupil who has absorbed your instruction thoroughly becomes a pharaoh. But he is an abased pharaoh, who worships the most base thing and considers himself to be lord over everything he reckons advantageous. A student of yours is obstinate, but an obstinate wretch who accepts utter abasement for a single pleasure. He demonstrates despicableness to the degree of kissing Satan's foot for some worthless benefit. And he is a bully, but because he has no point of support in his heart, he is a most impotent bullying braggart. The aim and endeavour of this pupil is to satisfy the lusts of the soul, to cunningly seek his own personal benefits behind the screen of patriotism and self-sacrifice, and work to satisfy his ambition and pride. He loves seriously nothing at all other than himself and sacrifices everything for his own sake."[60]

On the other hand, Bediuzzaman describes Qur'anic man as follows:

> "As for the sincere and total student of the Qur'an, he is a worshipping servant. But he is an esteemed servant who does not stoop to bow in worship before even the mightiest of creatures, and does not make a supreme benefit like Paradise the aim of his worship. And he is mild and gentle. But at the same time he is noble and gracious and does not lower himself before any but the All-Glorious Creator. Other than with His permission and at His command, he does not stoop before the lowly. And he is needy. But due to the reward his All-Generous Owner is storing up for him in the future, he is at the same time self-sufficient. And he is weak, but he is strong in his weakness, for he relies on the strength of his Lord Whose power is infinite."[61]

Bediuzzaman differentiates between two Europes.

> "One follows the sciences which serve justice and right and the industries beneficial for the life of society through the inspiration it has received from true Christianity."

The other,

> "the second, corrupt, Europe which, through the darkness of the philosophy of Naturalism, supposing the evils of civilization to be its virtues, has driven mankind to vice and misguidance."[62]

59. Ibid.
60. *Lem'alar,* 118 / *The Flashes,* 163-4.
61. *Lem'alar,* 118 / *The Flashes,* 164.
62. *Lem'alar,* 115 / *The Flashes,* 160.

The second Europe is rejected in Said Nursi's thought, because it is "corrupted with vice and misguidance and drawn far from the religion of Jesus." It is unthinkable that Muslims should imitate this Europe and its culture and thought. It has brought mankind the greatest evils. With its blind genius, which like the Antichrist (*Dajjāl*), has only one eye, it has bestowed on mankind a Hellish state. It is an incurable disease that casts man down from 'the highest of the high' to 'the lowest of the low.' It reduces him to the basest level of animality.[63] Bediuzzaman's call and wish is for today's Europe to turn to Islam, which is based on the religion of Abraham, and for it to be purified of innovations and blemishes like the trinity, the cross, Jesus' crucifixion, excommunication, and the denial of many prophets and principally, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). As is known, the gospel revealed to Jesus was corrupted within a short time by men of religion, and a scripture emerged which is self-contradictory and contains numerous superstitions not stemming from that religion. In the Iznik Council of 325 A.D. summoned by the Byzantine Emperor Constantine, the number of gospels was reduced to four. Bediuzzaman's call is a genuine call reflecting the Qur'anic viewpoint, commanding the unity of Divine religion and that there be no division. It is to be observed on examining all the varieties of religious institutions, official and private, of the Christian world today, that the realization of the promises of unity made by the Qur'an and Sunna[64] are every day growing closer.

The Church bases its claim that "there is no way of salvation outside the Church," on the principle "there are no prophets outside those recognized by the Church."[65] Because of this, they do not accept the prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH). In order to strengthen these beliefs and others like "Jesus was crucified to redeem mankind from its sins and he was chosen by God to do this, and belief in the Trinity,"[66] resort has been had to academic work in recent times, but this only represents a weak line in all the current lines of thought. Nevertheless,

> "This sort of new approach to Jesus' nature and the duty he was commanded to carry out in his capacity of prophet and messenger, should be clear evidence for those who think differently. In which case, if they do not enter Islam, although the truth is clear for all to see, they will be obliged to give the reasons for their persisting in their false ideas."[67]

In addition, cultural developments that lead people to refer to the revealed scriptures are bringing many Western scholars face to face with Islam. Such work has sown the seeds of a Christian thought purified of superstition, and it has also led to co-operation with faithful Muslims against atheism and disbelief. These developments show that the time spoken of in these verses has come:

And there is none of the People of the Book but must believe in him before

63. *Lem'alar,* 116 / *The Flashes,* 161.
64. Qur'an, 4:157; 43:61; in all Six Books of Hadith with the exception of Nasā'ī.
65. Hoffman, 61.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid.

his death; and on the Day of Judgement he will be a witness against them.[68]

And [Jesus] shall be a sign [for the coming of] the Hour [of Judgement]; therefore have no doubt about the [Hour], but follow Me; this is a straight way.[69]

For some people, the Islamic Umma is bound to abandon its religion and forgo its identity, and be lost in the melting-pot of a new world system if it benefits from the science and technology of present-day Western civilization, in the development of which it had a very large share.

When considering Western civilization, Bediuzzaman stated that it could have side-effects on Muslims societies in the fields of thought, the spirit, economics, society, politics, art, and so on.

Present-day civilization's psychological and intellectual dominance continually increases the dominance of its philosophy, standpoint, and economic order, because of which "worldly happiness is the focus of attention in place of eternal happiness,"[70] With mankind's view being directed towards other goals, "the struggle for livelihood together with lack of reliance on God has bewildered man's spirit, and Naturalist and Materialist philosophy blinded his intellect. And his social surroundings do not strengthen a person's mind and capacity in the matter of interpreting the Divine Law, they confuse and scatter them."[71] Doubtless, this intellectual superficiality and flabbiness of will, and their corollary, intolerable spiritual distress, are the chief characteristics to be observed in every sector which has been open to the assaults of Western culture.

From the economic point of view, at this time there is a general calamity which has taken the form of addiction to unnecessary things. "Since they have arisen from misuse of the will, illicit desires, and forbidden acts,"[72] the Western order opened up the free market in production and ensured that commercial profits came into the hands of a few tyrannical hands, leading to the happiness of the few instead of the social happiness Islam brings about.[73]

In sociology, the social activity Marx put forward in his social analysis and Hegel posited in the form of ideas, was based on continuous struggle and conflict. Differently to this, on the one hand the idea of democracy took its place, which exalts society, and on the other the private sector view emerged, which rather than the benefits of society puts chief emphasis on the privileged position of the individual. Bediuzzaman favours views that lay emphasis neither on individualism, nor on the role of society. Combatting the widespread social sicknesses of reliance on God without 'attempting causes,' laziness, and indifference, he called on people to revive the way of mutual assistance, co-operation,

68. Qur'an, 4:159.
69. Qur'an, 43:61.
70. *Sözler*, 460 / *The Words*, 508.
71. Ibid.
72. *Sözler*, 452 / *The Words*, 498.
73. Ibid.

and harmony, like "plants hastening to the assistance of animals[74] and animals hastening to the assistance of man."[75] He wanted these to be taken as examples, and unity and togetherness to be achieved; for these to be made the basis, not to splits and differences, but to social development and variety, despite differences in make-up, understandings, and type. He wanted continuous conflict to be abandoned, which is based on everyone trying to secure advantages at the expense of others, and is practiced by savages according to the law of the jungle.

In the field of politics, we see that Machiavellian philosophy tried to revive the genius of ancient Greece and Rome, and utilizing illicit means and neglecting the heart and spirit, to implant it in man's spirit and mind.[76] This philosophy exploited politics for the aims of Satanic genius, and upset all the balances of justice and right, which had kept ideas and societies on their feet.

Bediuzzaman also made comparisons between Western literature and science, which had declared war on the values of the Islamic world, and Islamic literature, which urges good. While Western literature and science are turned to genius and lust, Qur'anic literature invites man to light, guidance, and healing.[77]

People in the West nurture the idea that the reason Muslims are backward and have not caught them up in science and technology, is that they adhere to their religion, which does not encourage learning and is contemptuous of the world, urging them to asceticism. Bediuzzaman rejects these accusations concerning this vitally important subject in this way:

1. "To attribute to Christianity the virtues of civilization, which are not its property, and to show retrogression, the enemy of Islam, to be its friend, is a sign that the firmament is revolving in the opposite direction."[78] As may be understood from this, it is completely wrong to suppose that a comparison may be made between Western civilization, which revealed itself after being saved from the Church's oppression, and Islamic civilization—saying that it may progress if it leaves religion aside, as the people in the West did.

2. It is also completely wrong to encourage the Muslims to embrace worldly life in order to be saved from their backwardness and reach the way of "progress,"[79] showing material production to be the chief aim and making people accept that it is the only element and measure for progress and happiness. In the same way, it is unthinkable that the Muslim personality should accept the Western spirit and imitate Europe together with all its systems. On the other hand, Western civilization as though imbibes all the good of the nations it reaches out to, transforming them into a form suitable to its own purposes, destroying their civilization and culture and giving them the form it wants. One should be extremely careful in the face of its encouragement to embrace greedily the things of this world, for having abrogated the Shari'a and moral rules in

74. *Lem'alar*, 117 / *The Flashes*, 162.
75. Ibid.
76. *Sözler*, 666.
77. *Sözler*, 684.
78. *Mektûbat*, 445 / *Letters*, 547.
79. *Lem'alar*, 122 / *The Flashes*, 169.

society, it has very harmful effects, which lead to the degeneration of society. "Because for Muslims, greed causes loss and indigence. ... Yes, there are many things calling and driving man to the world, like the soul and its appetites, and need, and his senses and emotions, and the Devil, and the superficial enticement of the world.."[80] These things increase the inessential needs of Muslims, making them as though necessary. Indeed, this passion for material advantages breaks even "the bonds with which certain members of this nation are tied to religion," in which case, "those irreligious people will become as harmful for the life of society as fatal poison."[81]

By forcing consumerism onto Muslims, they are being pressurized and threatened with this and many other similar dangers which are contrary both to Islam, and to its incomparable cultural features, and to man's inborn nature. It is therefore an error to plant the Western spirit in the Muslim conscience and manipulate the Muslim mind towards acceptance of these ideas. Such endeavours will remain fruitless. Since it has dealt a blow at the essential and cultural aspects of the Islamic personality, it will not produce any palpable positive results. On the contrary, by instilling doubts in the basic pillars of this personality —the cultural base and that pertaining to belief—it will give rise to harmful results in the form of moral and social corruption. The clearest indication of this is to be seen in the area of government. "For it is more difficult to govern a hundred degenerates whose belief is shaken and morals corrupted, and to maintain public security among them, than to govern thousands of the righteous."[82] In addition Bediuzzaman draws attention to the countries that had fallen into the West's trap due to its promises of development and become its colonies, and were in a state of economic collapse. He says:

> "And do you not see that nothing apart from the most basic subsistence is left in the hands of Muslims? The rest is either stolen or seized by the European infidel tyrants or the dissemblers of Asia."[83]

Bediuzzaman asserts that to solve this problem arising from contemporary civilization, Muslims should pool their resources; he says

> "... they are in need of having their working conditions set in order, of security being established among them, and of having the principle of co-operation encouraged."[84]

Secular thought and the ways of pure reason cannot realize the above-mentioned social, civil, and economic order. Civilization and progress have to be constructed on foundations of religion and belief in accordance with "the sacred commands of religion, and fear of God, and firm adherence to religion."[85] Willy nilly this recalls Toynbee's words: "Religious thought is necessary for the establishment of civilization."

80. *Lem'alar,* 122 / *The Flashes,* 168.
81. Ibid.
82. *Lem'alar,* 123 / *The Flashes,* 169.
83. *Lem'alar,* 122 / *The Flashes,* 169.
84. *Lem'alar,* 123 / *The Flashes,* 169.
85. Ibid.

Bediuzzaman discusses some of the superior points of Islamic civilization. It is a moral civilization, because it established justice and brought peace. Its aim is virtue. In the same way, it is a civilization of humanity, for it aims to realize good for all humanity, not to provide benefits for individuals or a particular race. Its principle of life is mutual assistance in place of conflict. This leads to unity and solidarity, and so society finds life. The service it offers is guidance in place of gratifying desires and the instinctual appetites, the result of which is progress and prosperity in a way worthy of man.[86]

4. Understanding the natural laws and urging that they are utilized

As did other Islamic *'ulama*, Bediuzzaman divided the Divine laws into two: the laws of the Shari'a, formed from the Qur'an and Sunna of the Prophet (PBUH), and the natural laws. These have been defined as "Men adjusting their conduct and actions in accordance with the laws God Almighty and the prophets laid down is the Divine path which man has to follow, which produces certain results both in this world and the next."[87]

Perfect obedience to God is possible through conforming to both these laws simultaneously, just as rebellion against Him means neglecting both or either of them. Bediuzzaman said: "Just as there is obedience and rebellion in the face of the commands of the Shari'a, so there is obedience and rebellion in the face of the creative commands in the universe."[88] As is understood from this, in addition to the Shari'a of Islam, which proceeds from the Divine attribute of Speech, there is the 'Greater Shari'a of Creation,' which is ordained through Divine Will and supported by the angels. The following verse expresses this:

For to anything which We have willed, We but say the word, "Be!" and it is.[89]

The reward for conforming to the natural laws is received in this world, while the reward for obeying the laws of the Shari'a is in the hereafter. The natural laws look to everyone, believer or unbeliever. Whoever conforms to them is bound to achieve the result.[90] "For example, the reward of patience is victory; the punishment for idleness is poverty; the reward of effort is wealth; and the reward of constancy, triumph."[91] Whoever adheres to these principles will obtain the results. Those who direct social life have to act with these laws in view:

> "If one who opens up a new way in the life of human society does not act in conformity with the natural laws in force in the universe, he cannot be successful in beneficial works and in progress. All his acts come to be on account of evil and destruction."[92]

However much people imagine they may do so, to oppose the natural laws is contrary to the laws of creation. To transgress God's laws pertaining to this

86. *Sözler,* 664.
87. Zaydān, 'Abd al-Karīm, *al-Sunan Ilāhiyya,* 13.
88. *Mektûbat,* 449 / *Letters,* 552.
89. Qur'an, 16:40.
90. al-Shāṭibī concluded from Qur'anic verses that "effects always proceed from their causes."
91. *Mektûbat,* 449 / *Letters,* 552.
92. *Lem'alar,* 170 / *The Flashes,* 225.

world and the next and make absolute equality a basic principle, is only be possible by changing human nature and removing the fundamental wisdom in mankind's creation.[93] It is not opposed to the Divine law for the people of truth to be defeated by the people of falsehood. What the people of truth should do is not deviate from the Divine law so that they lose the dominant position; whatever they have to do they should do it in the best manner. In the same way, if they want to base their actions on firm foundations, they have to conform to both the laws of the Shari'a and the natural laws. If the truth with which they are burdened "is mixed with other things and has become unrecognizable;" if their scientific and material means are at a lower level in respect to "quantity and quality" than those of the opposing side; and their spiritual means are "falsehood," that is, they are opposed to the incontestable matters of revelation; and in addition to all of these, the belief, knowledge, and *taqwa* of the people of truth are impaired, and they have drawn away from good, sincerity, and being perfected; it is unavoidable that the people of falsehood will prevail over them, and this occurs according to the Divine laws in force in the universe.

Bediuzzaman urged Muslims to work hard to discover the Divine laws in force in themselves, in society, and in the world.

> "The chief purpose of what the Qur'an teaches about human and Islamic history, and the laws of the non-human worlds and mysteries of their beings, is to pave the way for the formation of a powerful Umma which will win the right to inherit the earth and carry out the duty of being God's vicegerent on earth and His witness. If no notice is taken of this and it is ignored, triumph, its goal and right, will relinquish its place to weakness and defeat..."[94]

> "Even if a truth is the means to falsehood, or it is prevailed over by the falsehood, it is still the means of a truth."[95]

5. Encouragement to study the empirical sciences

Bediuzzaman dwelt on the importance of 'attempting causes' and knowing "that causes are a veil to the hand of power and [having] recourse to them."[96] Far from being contrary to 'reliance on God,' with a pure intention, such an attitude will turn the natural sciences into Divine knowledge.[97] Only, emphasis on the Qur'an and Sunna had led to neglect of the sciences and their not being learnt.

In reply to the claim made by some Islamic scholars that there was "a clash between religion and science," Bediuzzaman said there was no contradiction between any of the truths of the Qur'an and science.[98]

Bediuzzaman stated that "all attainments and perfections, all learning, all progress, all sciences, have an elevated reality which is based on one of the Divine Names." When expounding the verse, *And He taught Adam the Names,*

93. *Lem'alar,* 171 / *The Flashes,* 225-6.
94. See, Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān*, iii, 2425.
95. *Sözler,* 677.
96. *Sözler,* 292 / *The Words,* 323.
97. *Sözler,* 674.
98. *Sözler,* 325 / *The Words,* 360.

all of them (2:31), he says that it "indicates almost explicitly the final points of all human attainment and progress, and their final goals,"[99] and that with this verse man is being summoned as follows:

> "O sons of Adam! Since as a proof of his superiority over the angels in the question of the vicegerency, I taught your forefather all the Names, you too, since you are his sons and the inheritors of his abilities, should learn all the Names and show your worthiness before all creatures at the degree of the Supreme Trust. For the way is open to you to rise to exalted rank like being at the highest position, dominant over all creatures in the universe, and for vast creatures like the earth to be subjected to you."[100]

Expounding the allusive meanings of verses describing the miracles of the prophets, Bediuzzaman says these verses are encouraging Muslims to apply themselves to learning the sciences. These verses are quite simply calling out:

> "O Muslim! Whatever century you are living in, and whatever means you have to hand, use them to progress and adhere to science! If you do this, awesome horizons will open up before you and all mankind. Just like the miracle of the Staff of Moses, 'You may find the subtlest effulgence of mercy, the water of life, with a staff. In which case, come on, work and find it!' And like, through God's grace, Jesus raised the dead to life: 'Remedies may be found for even the most chronic diseases. In which case... search for them and you will find them. It is even possible to give a temporary tinge of life to death.' And like David's smelting and giving shape to iron: 'If you obey my commands in creation, that wisdom and craft will be given you too.' And like Solomon attracting the throne of Belkis: 'I gave them also the capacity to see, consider, and understand the face of the earth... Come on, let's see you do it!' And like Solomon being given the ability to speak with birds: 'And most birds may be clothed in the form of an intimate friend or obedient servant, like Solomon's Hoopoe.'"[101]

The natural sciences discovered in accordance with the Divine laws will mislead no one. Only, even if science increases man's belief and certainty, as it advances it leads to an increase in the veils of heedlessness.[102]

In conclusion, "One thousand three hundred years ago, the Qur'an saw concealed in the darkness of the future, man's hidden fruits and progress, and showed them in a form better than we see and shall see."[103] However, when looking to the marvels of civilization, it suffices "with a secret sign, a concealed allusion, a slight indication, and a slender reminder."[104] The road was left open to man to work and strive and so see the far horizons of the Qur'an, and to discover its mysteries in accordance with the means at his disposal.

99. *Sözler,* 244 / *The Words,* 270.
100. Ibid.
101. *Sözler,* 237-44 / *The Words,* 262-8.
102. *Lem'alar,* 69 / *The Flashes,* 102.
103. *Sözler,* 248 / *The Words,* 274.
104. *Sözler,* 247 / *The Words,* 273.

6. Encouragement to work in the material field

Just as Said Nursi encourages people to work and strive, so does he also warn against laziness and irresponsibility. Idleness is a sort of non-existence, that is, a sort of living death, while work is the life of existence and the waking state of life.[105] Superficially, the idle person is happy and content, but in reality,

> "... those idle and lazy people who live in ease and affluence for the most part suffer more trouble and distress than those who strive and work. For the idle always complain about their lives, and want to pass them quickly through indulging in amusements. Whereas the one who works and strives is thankful and offers praise and does not want his life to pass quickly."[106]

When the conditions under which man lives do not permit this wish to be realized, his power, hopes, and needs remain under pressure. His heart feels sorrowful and everything is unthinkable. Whereas, working seriously and in addition carrying out the duty of offering praise and thanks to God, achieves the desired aims, and makes the person's life fruitful.

When explaining the saying, "Contentment is an imperishable treasure," Bediuzzaman stated that "sufficing with current circumstances is not the desirable contentment, but lack of aspiration,"[107] thus indicating the limits of contentment.

Bediuzzaman also mentioned the plant and animal kingdoms in this context, and that of inanimate creatures, and pointing out their orderly behaviour, which demonstrates their obedience to the creational commands, he wanted Muslims to take lessons from them, work with all their might, and keep in step with the tempo of activity and motion in the universe.

We can say that in connection with this, Bediuzzaman's views were similar to those of Malik b. Nabi, the Algerian thinker, who considered the logic of work to form an essential cultural factor in solving the problem of development.[108]

7. Call to Islamic Unity

Bediuzzaman yearned for Islamic unity and stressed the need for the Muslim Umma to gain prominence. Like the other subjects he treated, he set this idea on firm foundations in the mind and heart. He said that everyone should be firmly rooted members of the elevated Islamic Umma, stating at every opportunity how far it is from the idea of racialism, which has parted from the path of Islam and headed for atheism.[109]

As he repeated on many occasions as the Old Said, the idea of nationalism based on racialism had appeared in the Islamic world due to the influence of outside powers, and had reached proportions whereby it could shake its very foundations. This hostile idea was "a variety of European disease,"[110] with which

105. *Sözler*, 605.
106. *Lem'alar*, 124 / *The Flashes*, 171.
107. *Sözler*, 676.
108. Mālik b. Nabī, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍ*, 102.
109. *Mektûbat*, 396 / *Letters*, 495.
110. *Mektûbat*, 59 / *Letters*, 86.

Europe had "infected Islam.... thinking it would cause division, and Islam would break up and be ready to be swallowed."[111] This idea is also unacceptable in respect of humanity, for negative nationalism "is nourished by devouring others [and] persists through hostility to others,"[112] thus giving rise to mutual enmity and dispute between the Muslim peoples.

The idea of negative nationalism is not in conformity with the fundamentals of belief, because for Muslims "your Creator, Owner, Object of Worship, and Provider is one and the same."[113] All these points of unity necessitate closeness, mutual recognition, and co-operation.

In addition, there are many things based on civilized, political, economic, and social principles which necessitate that negative nationalism is eliminated, and a unity in ideas is firmly established, and an awareness of brotherhood developed. The most important of these is the Islamic Umma being surrounded by its enemies.[114] This requires that the Muslims, together under the umbrella of Islam, are wary of claims of differences in schools of law, language, race, colour, and nationality,[115] spread stealthily among them by the West. Bediuzzaman therefore warns the believers: "O people of belief! Your strength is reduced to nothing as a result of your passions and biased partisanships, and you can be defeated by the slightest forces."[116]

At the same time, the situation of the Muslims is not conducive to joy:

> "And as for the present, when the peoples and tribes of Islam are most in need of one another, and each is more oppressed and more poverty-stricken than the others, and they are crushed beneath European domination, to regard one another as strangers due to the idea of nationalism, and to consider one another to be enemies, is such a calamity that it cannot be described."[117]

This sickness can only be healed by Muslims together; in this way the West's stratagems will be brought to nothing. The economic pressure brought to bear on the Islamic world and its exploitation will cease, its backwardness will be solved and development secured. The goal of Islamic unity with respect to civilization is this, even if it is distant. The Divine promise must be adhered to and lessons taken from the civilization of our forefathers in the past; this will strengthen hopes for the return to Islamic civilization. The attitude of present-day civilization towards Muslims will change if Muslims can fulfil themselves, and they will be saved from many of the causes of decline and backwardness. Such a possibility is accepted by many Western thinkers as a frightening reality.

In order to point out the harm caused to Islam by basing government on racialism, Bediuzzaman cites the following evidence of history:

111. *Mektûbat*, 59, 298 / *Letters*, 86, 380.
112. *Mektûbat*, 298 / *Letters*, 380.
113. *Mektûbat*, 243 / *Letters*, 313.
114. *Mektûbat*, 299 / *Letters*, 381.
115. See, Richard Nixon's book "Current Opportunities," which contains a sad map showing the conflicts and splits in the Islamic world.
116. *Mektûbat*, 249 / *Letters*, 319-20.
117. *Mektûbat*, 299 / *Letters*, 381.

"Due to their combining some ideas of nationalism with their politics, the Umayyads offended the world of Islam, and in addition drew many calamities on themselves."[118]

European civilization, the source of the idea of racialism, itself suffered the same harm:

"Also, the European nations have greatly advanced the idea of racialism this century; the ghastly events of the Great War showed how harmful for mankind is negative nationalism, as well as the perpetual and ill-omened enmity of the French and Germans."[119]

The Ottoman Empire also received its share of the wounds opened up by racialism:

"And with us in the Second Constitutional Period —like the 'many tongues' at the destruction of the Tower of Babel, known as the 'ramification of peoples,' which resulted in their being divided and scattered— various refugee societies known as 'clubs' were formed, chiefly by the Armenians and Greeks, due to the idea of negative nationalism, which were the cause of division."[120]

Bediuzzaman also warned Muslims about the disputes between the Sunnis and the Shi'a, the two large branches of the Islamic world, saying that the atheist camps were continually waiting for bloody conflict to break out between them in the guise of inter-denominational clashes. He urged the removal of the causes of dispute, which are at a level unacceptable by the Shari'a, saying:

"And so, O Sunnis, who are the people of truth, and Alawis, whose way is love of the Prophet's Family! Quickly put an end to this meaningless, disloyal, unjust, and harmful dispute between you. Otherwise the atheistic current which is now so influential will make one of you a tool against the other, and use the one to crush the other. And after defeating the one it will destroy the tool."[121]

Bediuzzaman put forward principles pertaining to belief, reason, and the self which all the groups within the '*Ahl al-Sunna*' (Sunnis) could accept, which use different methods to understand and make judgements on the statements of the Qur'an and *Sunna*, and employ different means to reform and guide society. He tried to remove the reasons for division and enmity, and coldness and hard feelings; to gather them together under the banner of Divine unity; to unite their forces in the service of progress and development; and to give new life to the Qur'anic concepts of mutual understanding and assitance, and 'enjoining what is good and restraining from what is unlawful.' He listed as follows the principles that would bring this about:

1. To act positively.

2. To unite within the fold of Islam, irrespective of particular outlook, avoiding enmity for other outlooks, not criticizing them, interfering in their beliefs and sciences, or in any way concerning oneself with them.

118. Ibid.
119. Ibid.
120. Ibid.
121. *Lem'alar*, 26 / *The Flashes*, 43.

3. The follower of any right outlook not denigrating the ways of others.

4. To consider that union with the people of truth is a cause of Divine succour and the high dignity of religion.

5. To create a joint and collective force among Muslims.

6. To preserve truth from the assaults of falsehood.

7. To abandon the self and its egoism, and give up the mistaken concept of self-pride, and cease from all insignificant feelings aroused by rivalry, and to obtain sincerity.[122]

8. The conformation of original values and contemporary values

By saying that "Islam's principles are so profound that the deepest principles of philosophy cannot reach them; indeed, they remain superficial beside them,"[123] Bediuzzaman was stressing the need to preserve the the foundations of the Muslim Umma's belief, thought, and civilization. He himself undertook the struggle to defend its original values, showing the way in the matter of creating the conditions for these values and defining their limits. With the change of the conditions in which they found themselves, the subjects under discussion had also changed, but he at no time attempted to defend Islam using the terminology of the West. For to employ such a defence necessitates submission to some of the West's culture, plans, and theories. He mentioned that "some thinkers in part acccepted the principles of human and European philosophy, and contested them with their own weapons; they accepted them to a degree. They submitted unshakeably to some of their principles in the form of the physical sciences, and therefore could not demonstrate the true worth of Islam."[124]

With this new way of thinking, Bediuzzaman started to present the fundamental Islamic beliefs, based on the belief in God and His Most Beautiful Names. He explained the principal beliefs through Qur'anic methods and a realistic approach, and the use of examples comprehensible by the people of this time. At the same time, he avoided using the style and terminology of the science of theology (*'ilm al-kalām*) and those making independent judgements (*ijtihādī*). His endeavours resulted in very many students of the Risale-i Nur preserving their belief, saving it from the assaults of materialist philosophy, freemasonry, and irreligion. At a time Muslim society was advancing in material and technological fields and struggling to reach the level of modern civilization, none of them was the cause of any social fragmentation, and none withdrew into solitude like the sufis, becoming a tool to the designs of others.

In the social field, Bediuzzaman concentrated his activities on the structure of Islamic social thought, expounding a humanism based on Islam. He stated that racialism was an alien idea, that it was not in conformity with man's true nature, which inclines towards truth and justice; racialism has no connection with a structure like Islam, which is based on attainment, plurality within unity, the

122. *Lem'alar*, 151 / *The Flashes*, 203.
123. *Mektûbat*, 413 / *Letters*, 516.
124. Ibid.

exchange of beneficial things within the sphere of fixed values, and is in harmony with social and human realities. Furthermore, he pointed out the falsity of the idea of reinforcing Islam with nationalism. In reply to those who said: "We want to plant the luminous tree of religion, which has grown weak, in the earth of nationalism, so to strengthen it," he said:

> "The Tuba-tree of Islam, whose roots are founded in the reality of the universe and branches spread through the truths of the universe, cannot be planted in the earth of imaginary, temporary, partial, particular, negative, baseless, rancorous, tyrannical, and dark racialism. To try to do so is to attempt something foolish, destructive, and innovative."[125]

At the same time, it is a fruitless attempt and harmful: "Racialism is a sickness, like 'the European disease.'"[126]

Bediuzzaman draws a comparison between well-founded Islamic brotherhood and the brotherhood based on race and self-interest. The former is a loyal, true brotherhood, broad enough to include the whole Islamic Umma, while the latter is "a metaphorical, racial, temporary, and hateful brotherhood."[127] Such brotherhood is limited to a particular society and people.

From the historical point of view, Bediuzzaman describes the meaning of original values as walking down a "great highway"[128] which stretches from the depths of history to the present and conveys to the people of today the characteristics of their forefathers. For this reason, Bediuzzaman speaks of the dangers of the ties being broken between the Islamic Umma and history —Islam, which has gained for man the best personality, the most superior virtues, the most elevated characteristics, has established the best civilization and through it gained for man the finest fruits. The Muslims' ties with history being broken in the name of 'modernization' or 'opening up to the outside' —although they may pass down that great highway— and their being driven to "another particular and narrow way," will result in their being "led astray."[129] For these apparently attractive terms are nothing other than a means of making the Muslims into a 'morsel,' ready to be devoured by the West. If a Muslim

> ".. disowns all his forefathers, the source of honour, and all the past, the cause of pride, and abandons in the spirit the luminous highway of his righteous predecessors, which they considered to be their point of support, and performs actions following his own whims and passions, hypocritically, seeking fame, and following innovations, he will fall to the very lowest position... in the view of that numberless congregation. And he will gain a temporary and inauspicious position in the view of a number of insignificant, mocking, raving loafers."[130]

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi formed a barrier before efforts in Turkey to destroy 'the marks of Islam' and change their form and language. For just as this change

125. *Mektûbat*, 411 / *Letters*, 512-3.
126. *Mektûbat*, 396 / *Letters*, 495.
127. *Mektûbat*, 393 / *Letters*, 492.
128. *Mektûbat*, 406 / *Letters*, 507.
129. Ibid.
130. *Mektûbat*, 388 / *Letters*, 485.

did not arise from real need, so also it did not arise from a creditable social need. It arose rather from the "inauspicious ideas of the European reformists,"[131] adopted by some of those smitten by the West. At the same time, it was not right to compare Islamic history and European history, for the latter contained contradictions, and different characteristics, and had been the scene of internal conflict. The Islamic Umma was very different to all the others, each with its particular characteristics, bound to time and place and being the product of man's thought. Thus, to make changes in Islam as in Christianity, altering the forms of worship by translating the Qur'an into Turkish, in no way conformed with reality. One may grasp the impossibility —due to the origins, development, and philological meanings of those languages— of translating into them the Qur'anic styles, which, with their mysteries, eloquence and conciseness are unattainable.[132] The words of the call to prayer and five daily prayers are the same.

When discussing the necessity of preserving the original values of the Umma, Bediuzzaman was pointing out that if this was not done, its members would fall into division, and because of the mentality of 'blind imitation,' such a way would be pose great dangers. He asks: "Where can one who deviates from that sublime caravan by creating innovations find a light; which road can he take?"[133] In addition, he expresses as follows the fact that the principles which suit the West's mental and spiritual make-up and social life, do not suit the people of the East:

> "What will arouse the Asian peoples and cause them to progress and to govern, are religion and the heart. As for philosophy, it should assist religion and the heart, not take its place."[134]

Bediuzzaman said in regard to the question of scholars making new interpretations of the Shari'a (*ijtihād*) to meet the needs arising from modernization, that such a way could be used if certain obstacles were removed and the necessary conditions met. But he mentioned certain restrictions and conditions.[135] However, since the Qur'an "is every century turned directly towards all the classes of humanity, and addresses each particularly," it is clear that the form of the Qur'an's address will have to be explained each century by means of *ijtihād*. For "as time grows older, the Qur'an grows younger; it signs become apparent."[136] Moreover, most of the *'ulama* are in favour of utilizing the way of *ijtihad*, on condition it does not decline into an anarchy of ideas, or mislead people, and false ideas are not put forward.

131. *Mektûbat*, 407 / *Letters*, 508.
132. *Mektûbat*, 371 / *Letters*, 464.
133. *Mektûbat*, 370 / *Letters*, 463.
134. *Mektûbat*, 300 / *Letters*, 383.
135. See, *İctihad Risalesi* (Treatise on Independent Judgements of the Law—the Twenty-Seventh Word)
136. *Mektûbat*, 447 / *Letters*, 550.

9. Correcting the Muslim individual's morality

Said Nursi fixed his gaze on reconstructing the Islamic moral system on the injunctions of Islam in relevant fashion. So long as the purification and strengthening of the spirit were not completed, goals would not be achieved. If that was the case, it would be impossible to establish a moral balance in the Muslim Umma's other institutions and activities.

The morality he was trying to develop through his works was a source of mercy for the weak elements in society; like for aging parents, the sick, and the elderly. He wrote treatises which dealt with this question in particular. For example, the much repeated patience in the face of affliction and suffering; the preservation of family morality through the principle of "earnest, sincere and devoted respect;"[137] the strengthening of the bonds of society; securing the unity of society through belief; the removal of division,[138] with its obvious harm for society; declaring war on harmful developments like moral decline and the abandoning of high values, expressed by phrases like: "Once my stomach is full, what do I care if others die of hunger?"; and the rejection of greed and injustices like: "You work, and I'll eat.'"[139] And so on.

Bediuzzaman defined the Islamic Umma's view as follows: the principle of mutual assistance in life in place of conflict; taking as basic, virtue and God's pleasure in place of self-interest; accepting the bonds of religion, class and country in place of those of racialism.[140]

In the question of scientific discoveries, he was of the view that they should be used to reach moral goals. For the sciences reveal the horizons of the Most Beautiful Names, and through these sciences, one should act in accordance with the demands of belief.

His interpretation of the sciences and his philosophy of interpretation is this:

> "All attainments and perfections, all learning, all progress, and all sciences, have an elevated reality which is based on one of the Divine Names. On being based on the Name, which is concealed under numerous veils and has various manifestations and different spheres, the sciences and arts and attainments find their perfection and become reality. It is not some incomplete and deficient shadow."[141]

In such a situation, science does not separate people from belief and morality, driving them to evil and destructiveness.

It was Bediuzzaman's view that morality's roots lay in belief. Morality without belief is unthinkable. Like with all good qualities, the source of courage is belief and worship. While the source of cowardice is misguidance and vice.[142] Bediuzzaman's view of morality is completely realistic, for he does not disregard the principles governing life, but directs them towards good works. In this

137. *Sözler*, 89 / *The Words*, 109.
138. *Mektûbat*, 247 / *Letters*, 317.
139. *Mektûbat*, 252 / *Letters*, 324.
140. *Sözler*, 119 / *The Words*, 146.
141. *Sözler*, 244 / *The Words*, 270.
142. *Sözler*, 16 / *The Words*, 32.

way, they become the source of laudable morals and the means to happiness in this world and the next, in accordance with wisdom and reality.[143]

10. The development of the aesthetic sense in Muslims

Bediuzzaman directed Muslims to study the beauty of the universe, filled with endless examples of Divine beauty and perfection and innumerable adorned tableaux,[144] in order to train their souls, develop their sense of beauty, and expand and crystalize their understanding. All beings receive pleasure in relation to their capacity to manifest the endless beauties of the Divine Names.[145]

Bediuzzaman made these efforts to train the Muslims' aesthetic sense because it was a means to belief in God's acts, attributes and Names and to deepen contemplative thought on them. Worldly beauty "points in decisive fashion to the existence of the Maker's acts, and the existence of His Names, and of His attributes, and of His essential abilities, and to the necessary existence of His Most Pure and Holy Essence."[146] Only, "God's sacred beauty does not resemble the beauty of contingent beings and creatures, it is infinitely more elevated."[147]

On the other hand, Bediuzzaman preserved the balance between sensory, intellectual, and spiritual beauty or outward and inward beauty. In this way, he ensured that Muslims were not drowned in material delights on account of non-material beauty, thus degrading man's nobility. This shows the difference between contemporary civilization and Islam's balanced programme. "For example, like the beauty of belief, and the beauty of truth, and the beauty of light, and the beauty of flowers, and the beauty of the spirit, and the beauty of form, and the beauty of compassion, and the beauty of justice, and the beauty of mercy, and the beauty of wisdom are all different..."[148] So too, with this understanding, appreciation of beauty has been accepted as a fundamental element in the formation of the Muslim personality and the Islamic Umma, and in contemporary Islamic culture.

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143. *Mektûbat*, 30 / *Letters*, 52.
144. *Şualar*, 22.
145. Ibid.
146. *Şualar*, 61.
147. *Şualar*, 62.
148. Ibid.

A Comparison of the Thought of Bediuzzaman and Muhammad Iqbal

Jalal Jalalizade

It is incumbent on all Muslims and thinkers to concern themselves with reviving the memories and works of the religious scholars, who are the protectors of Muslims. For they have inscribed the pride and dignity of the Umma on the pages of history. Such scholars were applauded by God's Messenger (PBUH) when he said: "The scholars are the heirs of the prophets." They also strove to their utmost for people to reach their freedom, to save their belief, destroy their idols, invite them to worship God, the Single One of Unity, and to dispel weakness and make good loss. They sowed seeds of love, hope, and freedom. The eminent scholar Muhammad Kurd 'Ali said:

> "Never forget those of virtue among you or close to you. Mention them frequently, and talk of them in your gatherings. In order to keep their memories alive in people's hearts and to acquaint the younger generations with them, interpret their lives and explain them, write books about them, and encourage others to publish their works."[1]

With such a thought I decided to carry out a study on the roles undertaken by the two great scholars, Imam Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and the Islamic philosopher Iqbal Lahuri, and to write an article and discuss their views. In this way, our valued readers would gain a better understanding of the importance and rank of the learned *mujahid* scholar, Bediuzzaman.

Why did I choose such a subject? In this paper, with God's help, I shall attempt to answer this question. Bediuzzaman and Iqbal were two stars of the

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1. Muḥammad Kurd 'Alī, *Rijālāt fi'l-Umma*, Damascus, Dār al-Ma'rifa 1988, 1.

20th century, who lit up the skies of religion, split the suffocating darkness, and spread the wings of mercy and knowledge over the whole world of Islam.

Iqbal was born in 1877 and died in April 1938, while Bediuzzaman was born in 1876, and died in 1960. Whoever studies the works and views of these two scholars about important social issues will see that although they never met and were not aware of each other's ideas, they put forward similar views on many subjects. It is really amazing. How is it two thinkers and reformers who lived at the same time but in different places discussed the same subjects and stated the same ideas? Is it possible for two regenerators of religion to appear in the same century? God's Prophet (PBUH) said: "At the start of every century God will send someone (Ar. *man*) to renew His religion."[2]

Dr. Muhsin 'Abdulhamid wrote the following about this Hadith:

> "It does not mean that only one regenerator of religion comes in any one century. For 'someone' (*man*) can be plural as well as singular. So it is possible for more than one to appear in a single century. There is particular need in a century when all Muslims have suffered great decline, and in addition to this a civilization recalling the Age of Ignorance has overrun everywhere, colonized the Muslims' lands, altered all those things characteristic of them, corrupted their mentality, caused them to doubt their religion, and threatened to annihilate them altogether. Then, it is surely an instance of Divine mercy for many regenerators to be sent. May God assist those regenerators in renewing many areas of the lives of Muslims, in the matters of religion and of this world."[3]

Thus, two distinguished persons emerged in two places far from each other, in two different schools. On the one hand, Iqbal graduated from modern institutes and academic establishments, and on the other, Bediuzzaman studied in the religious schools, which taught according to traditional methods. But the two of them were as though present in the same dwelling. How would it have been, I wonder, if like Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh, the two had met and studied together, if they had exchanged ideas? Doubtless, had this been the case, the Islamic world would have profited to a greater extent and would have awoken earlier from the sleep of death that had descended on it.

The early period in the formation of their characters

Both scholars had a particular distinguishing characteristic. Iqbal had chosen the path of learning and study under the influence of Sir Thomas Arnold, while Bediuzzaman had undertaken his struggle in consequence of the mark left on his heart by another incident. The British Minister for the Colonies, Gladstone, had picked up a copy of the Qur'an and declared: "So long as the Muslims have this book we cannot truly dominate them. We must either take it from them or make them lose their love of it." This had shaken Bediuzzaman so profoundly he vowed that he would "prove and demonstrate to the whole world that the Qur'an is an undying and inextinguishable sun,"[4] and he dedicated his life and whole

2. al-Albānī, *Silsilat al-Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥa*, Dār al-Maktab al-Islāmī, ii, 150.
3. Muḥsin 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, *Mutakallim al-'Aṣr al-Ḥadīth*, Cairo, 102.
4. Şahiner, Necmeddin, *Bilinmeyen Taraflarıyla Bediüzzaman Said Nursî*, 73.

being to proving the Qur'an's miraculousness and urging the Muslims to adhere to it once again.

We may now begin our main subject by setting forth the ideas of these two persons on various matters, and Bediuzzaman's position as a thinker and someone who knew that the enemies of Islam most certainly lacked the power to extinguish God's light. There is no doubt that even if the unbelievers cannot abide it, God will complete His Light. With every sunrise and passing day, all Muslims and particularly the young and enlightened will come to know Bediuzzaman better, and through God's grace, his cry will reach the most distant places.

Their views on the Qur'an

The great scholar Iqbal said:

> "The Qur'an is a living book. Its pre-eternal wisdom contains the mysteries of life's creation. It imparts life to men and strengthens the weak. When one of the Qur'an's suras depicts the pages of the world, the depictions of the priests and rabbis fade away."[5]

Bediuzzaman's view is this:

> "The Qur'an is the pre-eternal translator of the mighty book of the universe; ... it is the sun, foundation, and plan of the world of Islam; ... it is the instructor of the world of humanity; the light and water of Islam, the macroanthropos; the true wisdom of mankind; and the true guide and leader urging humanity to prosperity and happiness; it is both a book of law, a book of prayer, and a book of wisdom, ... and a unique, comprehensive sacred book comprising many books... "[6]

It is seen here that there are strong resemblances between the two thinkers. The Qur'an was very influential in the formation of their characters. They had recourse to it in all fields; they adhered to its guidance, searching for a way the Umma could regain its dignity and pride; they called on people to act in accordance with it; they strove with all their might to revive the role of God's Book, to remove it from the shelves of mosques and re-establish in people's lives, and to raise it from being read only in the graveyard and at *mawlids* to being studied seriously and learnt. Whoever reads the Risale-i Nur with attention will see that Bediuzzaman worked all his life to spread God's Book, that he expounded its truths as a great Qur'anic commentator and disseminated its knowledge, and that he adhered closely to its verses as an utterly faithful soldier, carrying out what it commands and avoiding what it prohibits.

Their views on freedom

The collapse of the Caliphate and breaking up of the Islamic lands saw the sly rise of cunning propaganda under the masks of freedom, independence, nationalism, and the equality of the sexes. In order to confuse Muslims, certain sectors endeavoured to spread the idea that Muslims should take the West as their

5. Iqbāl al-Lahūrī, *Dīwān-i Iqbāl* (Persian), Tehran, 82.
6. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Sözler*, Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1980, 339 / *The Words* [English trans.], Sözler Publications, 376-7.

model. Influenced by this, many innocent Muslims fell into the trap set by the West. Our two scholars, however, strove to explain the beliefs of Islam and the Divine ordinances in order to save the Islamic Umma from dangers of this sort. Through God's grace, they were successful in preserving Muslims' spirits, the hearts and consciences from the fatal poisons that were penetrating to their very depths. Iqbal says:

> "*When, due to the deceits of freedom, the ties between the Qur'an and the Caliphate were severed,*
>
> *Those pledged to God and the worshippers, broke away from the bond of servitude, on account of others than God.*"[7]

Bediuzzaman's interpretation is this:

> "Restrict freedom with the conduct and manners of the Shari'a. For if the ignorant and the people at large have unrestricted freedom and unconditional liberty, they become dissolute and unruly. In the prayers of justice your *qibla* should be the four schools of law; then the prayers may be correct."[8]

Bediuzzaman likens non-Islamic Western freedom to a fatally poisonous snake. A true Muslim should not be deceived by this glittering, yet deceptive, freedom. True freedom is to be found in Islam. A person in the shadow of Islamic freedom ascends to the highest heavens and shakes free of all earthly restrictions. In consequence, he becomes a sincere servant of his Creator, without bowing to any men like himself.

Hafiz-i Shirazi says: " For years my heart sought a source of strength."

In exactly the same way, with great energy Bediuzzaman demanded something from those around him, and that was the teaching of the modern sciences.

In recent centuries, illiteracy, ignorance, and backwardness had dominated many areas of the Muslims' lives. Muslim societies were sunk in backwardness, far from progress. Just as the teaching of the religious sciences was inadequate, so was the teaching of the modern sciences. The *'ulama* were preoccupied with superficial subjects, the differences between the schools of law, and with writing out glosses on old works. For this reason, innovations, superstitions, and contradictions were rife. The greatest problem afflicting the Muslims was this. Many Muslim scholars and thinkers exerted themselves to remedy this and save the Umma from its predicament.

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi addressed himself wholeheartedly to this problem, so that the flowers might be gathered in the future. When he first arrived in Istanbul, he went to Sultan 'Abdulhamid and requested the opening of schools in which the modern sciences would be taught together with the Islamic sciences. For he believed in the necessity of their being taught together and not separated from each other, and that according to the Islamic method the two form a unity.[9]

Iqbal says the following on the same subject:

> "There is one way before us: even if our method is opposed to that of our predeces-

7. *Dīwān-i Iqbāl*, 464.
8. Şahiner, *Bilinmeyen Taraflarıyla*, 117.
9. Muḥsin 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, *Mutakallim al-'Aṣr al-Ḥadīth*, 3.

sors, it is our teaching the modern sciences, giving them the necessary importance, and moreover, our following Islamic education in the light of these sciences."[10]

Although there is a difference of method between them, the two scholars are united concerning the teaching of the modern sciences. But Bediuzzaman's method was more powerful and beneficial.

Their views on despotism

In Islam, the system of government is based on consultation. Despotism and dictatorship have no place in it. In Islamic history, the Caliphate turned into a hereditary monarchy following the period of the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs, and the elevated principle of consultation fell into abeyance. Misguided religious scholars and preachers gathered around the king. They applied themselves to exonerating the monarchs' misrule, and adopting extremely exaggerated terms of address, called on the people to obey the rulers. This was interpreted differently by people and especially by non-Muslims, who were carried away by false ideas, like that Islam supported despotism. Truly, this was a misunderstanding and a false delusion. For many sincere scholars of religion were imprisoned for long years, were killed, suffered torture, or were held under house-arrest. The best example of this was Bediuzzaman. He said:

> "Belief requires not humiliating and abasing others through oppression and despotism, and not abasing oneself before oppressors. One who is a true servant of God will not be a servant of others. Yes, the freedom which is accordance with the Shari'a is a bounty of God Almighty through His Names of All-Merciful and Compassionate, and is a characteristic of belief."[11]

Now let us listen to Iqbal and see how the monarchy was opposed to Islam:

> "Despotism and dictatorship are unlawful. In the secular system man is not free; quite to the contrary, he is a slave. The Caliphate is witness to our position in this matter, and truly, despotism is unlawful for us. The monarchic system consists entirely of knavery and fraud, while the Caliphate is the preserver of the Divine laws. Man is a slave in this world, the systems he sets up are defective and his actions are not without fault. But I am God's servant and before Him alone do I express my want. In His religion, despotism is unlawful."[12]

Their views on *ijtihad* (Independent judgements of the law)

One of the important questions debated by the *'ulama* is the 'closing' of the door of *ijtihad*. There is no doubt that *ijtihad* was practised in the time of the Prophet (PBUH) and of the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs. Very many of the Companions of the Prophet, the generation following them, and the founders of the schools of law issued rulings on the law, practised *ijtihad*, and desired that unquestioning following of a previous single ruling (*taqlīd*) was avoided. From the 6th century of the Hijra, with the current of *ijtihad* ceasing to flow, a period of decline and following of earlier rulings began. Thus, the door of *ijtihad*, which God had opened up before them out of His mercy, was closed.

10. Iqbāl al-Lahūrī, *Iḥyā'l-Fikr al-Dīnī fi'l-Islām*, Tehran.
11. Muḥsin 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, *Mutakallim al-'Aṣr al-Ḥadīth*, 14.
12. *al-Kulliyāt Iqbāl*, 464.

However, some true religious scholars looked on the matter in a subtle perspective and fitting manner. On the one hand, in connection with questions not dealt with by former scholars, they paid great attention to forestalling any innovations entering Islam, and on the other, they laid down conditions for *ijtihad* in order to prevent everyone putting forward their own judgements and introducing changes by playing at issuing *fatwas*. Bediuzzaman says:

> "The door of *ijtihad* is open, but at this time there are six obstacles to entering it."[13]

And having listed these obstacles, he says:

> "Since the great interpreters of the law among the righteous early generations of Islam were close to the time of the Companions of the Prophet, the age of light and age of truth, they were able to receive a pure light and make pure interpretations. But the interpreters of the law at this time look at the book of reality from behind so many veils and from such a long distance that they can see even its clearest letters only with difficulty."[14]

However, from Iqbal's point of view, in this age of decline, the closing of the door of *ijtihad* is an instance of good for the Islamic Umma. Thus, the efforts of misguided religious scholars to destroy Islam and to have the *mujtahids* of former times disregarded, will come to nothing. Iqbal said:

> "Follow the way of the former scholars, for to do so is a cause of unity. To follow them maintains order and is a means of preserving the Umma. *Ijtihad* carried out in this time of decline would cause harm to the Umma. While to follow the earlier scholars is better than the *ijtihads* carried out by the misguided scholars. Especially at a time when all the ways leading to religion are straitened and those of ill-intention hold sway."[15]

Their views on philosophy

Once the works on philosophy had been translated into Arabic, philosophers like Ibn Sina and Farabi emerged among the Muslims. However, philosophical works were either accepted or rejected by the religious scholars. Imam Ghazali and Ibn Salah al-Shahrazuri wrote works refuting them and declaring them to be unbelievers. On the other hand, other scholars supported the philosophers. There was also a third group, which chose the way of moderation. They considered neither the former nor the latter to be right; that is, they chose a way between both extremes. They discussed facts objectively, neither rejecting philosophy altogether, nor accepting it absolutely. They said that philosophy should be purified of certain errors and misguided ideas, and that the way of the prophets should be adhered to. Bediuzzaman said:

> "In the world of humanity, from the time of Adam up to now, two great currents, two lines of thought, have always been and will so continue. Like two mighty trees, they have spread out their branches in all directions and in every class of humanity. One of them is the line of prophethood and religion, the other that of philosophy in its various forms."[16]

13. *Sözler*, 449 / *The Words*, 495.
14. *Sözler*, 452 / *The Words*, 499.
15. *Kulliyāt-i Iqbāl-i Lahūrī*, 85.
16. *Sözler*, 505 / *The Words*, 561.

And he continues:

> "Whenever those two lines have been in agreement and united, that is to say, if the line of philosophy, having joined the line of religion, has been obedient and of service to it, the world of humanity has experienced a brilliant happiness and social life. Whereas, when they have become separated, goodness and light have been drawn to the side of the line of prophethood and religion, and evil and misguidance to the side of the line of philosophy."[17]

Iqbal considers philosophy to be necessary for religion, for there are a number of shared points between them. He asks a number of questions in connection with this: what is the basic substance of the world in which we live? Does it have which are eternal and constant? As human beings, how can we reach eternity through it? What is our position in the universe? What sort of conduct and morality is appropriate to this position of ours? He then provides the answers:

> "These questions are the joint questions of philosophy and religion. But philosophy lacks the freedom to study and investigate them. The essence of religion is belief, and belief resembles a bird. It has no need of philosophy. Reason and thought are the two living element of man's intellect."[18]

Thus, the two thinkers share the same position in the question of philosophy. And they both say that without returning to religion, philosophy alone cannot provide man's happiness. Iqbal says:

> "The philosophy which denies prophethood strives and exerts itself to reach [true] knowledge of the world, as perfect knowledge. But it has not been successful and it will not be. For it is impossible for philosophy to reach the truth without drawing on prophethood."[19]

Their agreement concerning Western civilization

Dr. 'Abd ul-Wadud Shalabi says the following concerning the two scholars' views on the West:

> "Their position on Western civilization is the same. Neither of them were deceived by the apparent face of that civilization and its fine features. Neither of them heeded its lying propaganda. They both looked to the essence and spirit of the civilization, and tried to understand its hidden points and secrets."[20]

Bediuzzaman distinguishes between two Europes and Western civilizations:

> "Europe is two. One follows the sciences which serve justice and right and the industries beneficial for the life of society through the inspiration it has received from true Christianity; this first Europe I am not addressing. I am rather addressing the second corrupt Europe which, through the darkness of the philosophy of Naturalism, supposing the evils of civilization to be its virtues, has driven mankind to vice and misguidance."[21]

17. Ibid.
18. *Iḥyā'l-Fikr al-Dīnī fi'l-Islām*, 35.
19. Ghulāmriḍā Sa'īdī, *Andīshehā-yi Iqbāl-i Lahūrī*, Tehran 1370, 307.
20. *Badī'u'z-Zamān Sa'īd al-Nūrsī fī Mu'tamar 'Ālamī Ḥawla Tajdīd al-Fikr al-Islāmī*, Cairo 1992, 116.
21. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Lem'alar*, 115 / *The Flashes Collection* [English trans.], Istanbul, Sözler Publications 1995, 160.

What a fine and just judgement Bediuzzaman makes here. He has stated the truth without misleading others or concealing anything. He looks on the West as neither friend nor enemy. He has not held back from stating the truth, even if it is against him. Yes, we saw how he differentiates between two Europes, now we can see how addresses the second Europe:

> "Know this, O second Europe! You hold a diseased and misguided philosophy in your right hand and a harmful and corrupt civilization in your left, and claim, 'Mankind's happiness is with these two!' May your two hands be broken and may these two filthy presents of yours be the death of you! ... And so they shall be!"[22]

When Dr. Iqbal returned to India he was aware of all the ugliness of the West. He was amazed at those who went to Europe and became infatuated by its apparent glitter. We see this in the following words, taken from his works:

> "If only I had not wasted those years of my life I spent in Europe!"[23]
>
> "Europe is committing suicide. Its spirit is dying of thirst in those deceptive mirages. There is a civilization there, but it is one that is drying up. If it is going to take its last breath and expire, it will commit suicide tomorrow or the next day. Its foundations have been shaken, it cannot withstand even the slightest shove."[24]

Their views on sufism

If by sufism what is meant is someone who struggles against his soul, is disdainful of the superficial beauties of this world, and engages in frequent worship of God, then Bediuzzaman was a sufi in the true meaning. However, rather than a sufi who retreats as far as he can from the company of men, Bediuzzaman was a sincere *mujahid* (striver in God's way), a hero, a thinker, and religious scholar (*faqih*). He was not someone to seek enduring fame, be preoccupied with himself and forget others, shirk responsibilities, and sit with the powerful. On the contrary, he was aware that a heavy responsibility had been laid on him at this time. This was the saving of the belief of a society that was beset with difficulties. He carried out his trust in the best way. May God reward him in the best way. So where are the scholars who were Bediuzzaman's contemporaries and were silent when they should have defended the truth? They are all dead and gone, not a trace of them remains. But Bediuzzaman's name will always be remembered as long as Islam and belief continue.

Bediuzzaman could have applied to the highest levels of government, he could have had for himself the titles given to those in high places. But he did none of this. He said: "I am not a shaykh, I am a teacher."[25] He would say to all who came to him:

> "Belief is necessary, Islam is necessary; this is not the age of sufism."[26]

In numerous places in the Risale-i Nur he says that it is not the time of sufism

22. Ibid.
23. Ghulāmriḍā Sa'īdī, *Ārā-yi Iqbāl-i Lahūrī*, Tehran, 347.
24. *Badī'u'z-Zamān Sa'īd al-Nūrsī fī Mu'tamar 'Ālamī Ḥawla Tajdīd al-Fikr al-Islāmī*, 118.
25. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Mektûbat*, Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1981, 59 / *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Letters 1928-1932* [Eng. trans.], Sözler Publications 1994, 85.
26. Ibid.

and following the sufi path, but the time to save belief.[27] He said to those who say that sufism saves the life of the hereafter:

> "A person without belief may not enter Paradise, but those who have gone to Paradise without sufism are truly numerous. Man cannot live without bread, but he can live without fruit. Sufism is the fruit, and the truths of Islam, basic sustenance."[28]

He said about misguided religious scholars: "There is a grave threat from the 'bad' religious scholars. Other scholars have to be particularly careful at this time."[29]

A difference is to be observed between the two scholars on the question of sufism. Iqbal was opposed to the sufi method and the conduct and practices of its way. Only, he himself held certain sufistic ideas, which are widely followed among the sufis, like 'the unity of existence,' which deems it necessary for a person to annihilate his own soul on God's way. Iqbal considered it necessary for a person to be trained, expanded, and prepared in this way so that the soul could be known for what it is, and the person could hand himself over to God and be His vicegerent and shadow on earth. In the event of the person achieving this, he would be "God's dwelling" (*maḥallullāh*) and "together with God" (*ma'llāh*). He addressed man in this way:

> "Whom do you seek? Why are you not content although He is manifest and you are concealed? You see no one save yourself, despite trying to see Him. If you try to see your own self, you will see no one save Him."[30]

Iqbal said this about the sufis and the misguided scholars:

> "If a sufi and a scholar have nothing of the Qur'an's philosophy, they will understand nothing of the Qur'an. They will merely recite Sura Ya. Sin. to the sick so that the sick may have an easy death."[31]

Bediuzzaman, however, rejects 'the unity of existence' in certain terms. He says:

> "Through His creativity, all things have an accidental existence. For sure, in relation to the Necessarily Existent's existence their existence is an extremely weak and unstable shadow, but it is not imagination, it is not fancy. Almighty God gives existence through His Name of Creator and He perpetuates that existence."[32]

Their views about nationalism and racialism

One of the most grievous calamities which descended on the Islamic Umma was the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the splitting up of the Islamic lands and the resulting rise of the spirit of racialism among its peoples, and the fire of war being kindled between them. This also made it easy for their enemies to swallow up the Muslims. How well Iqbal describes this:

27. Muḥsin 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, *Mutakallim al-'Aṣr al-Ḥadīth*, 205.
28. *Mektûbat*, 21 / *Letters*, 41.
29. *Mektûbat*, 398 / *Letters*, 498.
30. al-Mīnāwī, Mujtabā, *Iqbāl-i Lahūrī Shā'ir-i Pārsī-Gū-yi Pākistān*, Tehran, 20.
31. *Kulliyāt-i Iqbāl-i Lahūrī*, 195.
32. *Mektûbat*, 77 / *Letters*, 108.

> "One time I was saved from being bound by earth and water; I said: 'I am a Greek, I am an Afghan.' But before being a particular colour, or belonging to any country, or speaking any language, I was a human being."[33]

According to Iqbal, there is no difference between racialists and idolators. Because both sacrifice humans to idols. An idolator is always on the search for new idols. Like Araz, he makes new gods for himself. Idols known as colour, race, and domination demand blood. Man resembles a slaughtered sheep before these idols.[34]

Dr. Iqbal does not indicate the negative and positive dimensions of racialism. Bediuzzaman however says there are two sorts; he condemns negative racialism, saying it is a fruit of Western civilization planted in order to destroy Islamic brotherhood. He says:

> "Nationalism is of two kinds: one is negative, inauspicious, and harmful; it is nourished by devouring others, persists through hostility to others, and is aware of what it is doing."[35]

Bediuzzaman gives examples from history, such as the Umayyads and Europeans, and describes the harm of racialism:

> "As for the present, when the peoples and tribes of Islam are most in need of one another, and each is more oppressed and more poverty-stricken than the others, and they are crushed beneath European domination, to regard one another as strangers due to the idea of nationalism, and to consider one another to be enemies, is such a calamity it cannot be described."[36]

He describes positive nationalism like this:

> "Positive nationalism arises from an inner need of social life and is the cause of mutual assistance and solidarity; it ensures a beneficial strength; it is a means for further strengthening Islamic brotherhood."[37]

Their views on Islamic Unity

Islam is the religion of unity and the affirmation of it. It forbids division and divisiveness. It calls to brotherhood and unity in times of dissension, strife, and division. Alas, the Umma was enveloped in the clouds of abasement and backwardness. It had remained behind the times and could not advance from where it was. Moreover, they were pleased at how things were going and content at their situation. If it had not been for God's grace, they would perhaps have taken up their places among the idolators. In this grim situation, the signs of religion were being annihilated; so too, the unbelievers and dissemblers, the enemies of the Islamic Umma, were pursuing their activities. However, rather than directly opposing these threats and dangers, religious scholars and those who call to the way of the Sustainer of All The Worlds were summoning all the Umma to unity and togetherness and were trying to remove the differences between them. With-

33. al-Mīnāwī, Mujtabā, *Iqbāl-i Lahūrī Shā'ir-i Pārsī-Gū-yi Pākistān*, 20.
34. Ibid., 21.
35. *Mektûbat*, 298 / *Letters*, 380.
36. *Mektûbat*, 299 / *Letters*, 381.
37. *Mektûbat*, 299 / *Letters*, 381.

out doubt, the chief of those who favoured this method and style of action was Bediuzzaman. He gave supreme importance to the question of unity:

> "And so, O Sunnis, who are the People of Truth, and 'Alawis, whose way is love of the Prophet's Family! Quickly put an end to this meaningless, disloyal, unjust, and harmful dispute between you. Otherwise the atheistic current which is now so influential will make one of you a tool against the other, and use the one to crush the other. And after defeating the one it will destroy the tool. Since you are believers in Divine unity, it is essential to leave aside unimportant matters which necessitate division while there are a hundred fundamental sacred bonds between you which command brotherhood and unity."[38]

Iqbal exclaims passionately on the same subject:

> "Isn't our Prophet the same? Aren't our religion, our Ka'ba, our Qur'an the same? Isn't our God the same? Has unity ever caused us any harm? You tell me, what good has this Umma seen from division and conflict, strife and dissension?"[39]

Their views on literature

'Allama Iqbal was a poet. He wrote his poetry in Urdu and Persian, and generally expressed his ideas in his poetry. His poetry reflects the finest learning and contains the subtlest of ideas. Some of his works have been translated into other languages, which is an indication of his mastery in this field. Bediuzzaman makes a confession:

> "I am dissatisfied with my abilities in the art of handwriting and in verse. As for verse and metre, in my whole life I have been unable to write even a short piece."[40]

However, anyone who studies the Risale-i Nur will see that the work has issued from a magical pen, an eloquent tongue. Let us listen to what the master of poets, Mehmet Akıf, said, and learn about Bediuzzaman's writing: "From the point of view of literature and philosophy, great poets such as Shakespeare and Hugo would have risen only to be students of Bediuzzaman."[41] And we say that indeed, his literary achievement was great.

Their views on the Islamic solution

Religion consists of three spheres: the first is that of worship and the secondary precepts; the second are the matters of belief; and the third and central principle consists of the religious practices. However, very few thinkers have understood this point, and only a few have discussed it in their works. However, the two scholars we are discussing explained this, and understood that without belief and the practice of religion being firmly rooted, Islamic life and society cannot be established. Islamic society can be set up only through being reinforced with the practice of religion.

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi strove to oppose the devastating calamities and difficulties that had caused Muslims to lose the profound insight of belief, extinguishing the powerful minds who would put forward enlightened ideas. Furthermore, this grim situation, which was a source of severe distress for the Umma, had made the Muslims unaware of the dangers that surrounded them on every side. In Bediuzzaman's view, the true Islamic solution was to be found through education based on firm belief and a sound training of the mind. Belief and the power of reason are like two wings, for it is with two wings that a bird may fly round the skies.[42]

38. *Lem'alar*, 26 / *The Flashes Collection*, 43.
39. Ghulāmriḍā Sa'īdī, *Andīshehā-yi Iqbāl-i Lahūrī*, 154.
40. *Sözler*, 646.
41. Iḥsān Qāsim al-Ṣāliḥī, *Badī'u'z-Zamān Sa'īd al-Nūrsī*, 188.

Not falling into despair when faced with adverse situations, hope, victory, conquest, and reliance on God, which are all marks of belief, are the most prominent qualities of the Islamic *mujahids*. Bediuzzaman was one of these. Although Islam was the subject of hostile and unrelenting attacks, he had hope that it would soon be triumphant.

> "Despite the calamities and troubles raining down on the heads of the Islamic Umma, and the oppression and exiles he himself suffered, Bediuzzaman said that the future would be Islam's. He gave the glad news that following the distressing, sad winter the religion was experiencing, a spring would come and all mankind would receive its bounties. For this was what mankind needed. He said that there was nothing that could prevent the coming of the Islamic spring and that God willing, it would most definitely arrive."[43]

In a lecture he gave in Cairo in 1930, the philosopher-poet Iqbal said that he had strong hopes about the founding of an Islamic state. He said:

> "The way things are going show that the Islamic order is the ideal for forming a righteous society, for the ordering of social life, the solution of economic problems, and being oriented towards the true aims of civilization. The application of this order, between belief and action, spirit and matter, the individual and society, would give rise to great wonders from the point of view of the rulers of the Islamic lands. All the thinkers in the world have ideas about the newness of its method."[44]

Bediuzzaman and Iqbal as regenerators of religion

We mentioned above the persons who played an important role in the formation of Iqbal's thought. Iqbal attached the greatest importance to them and accorded them much value. He followed the way of guides like Afghani and Mawlawi. Bediuzzaman, however, was independent. He studied no school of thought, he was the student of no master, he was attached to no political party or organization. He was, however, a great leader in his own field. He raised the banner of belief, he exalted the name of Islam. He had a single master: the Qur'an. God inspired him with the renewal of religion. Dr. Muhsin 'Abdulhamid said concerning this:

> "Without doubt, as regards the way he followed at this time, Bediuzzaman was a regenerator of religion without equal. For he did not set out with any one science, he did not kneel before any one master, he was not tied to what any one person had

42. al-Dasūqī, Muḥammad, *al-Ḥall al-Islāmī Bayna'l-Naẓariyya wa'l-Taṭbīq*, Dār al-Wafā', 106.
43. Ibid., 107.
44. Ibid., 123.

said or written. His masters were numerous, the sciences he studied were many, the knowledge he investigated was truly extensive. Despite this, his above characteristic did not change."[45]

Muhsin 'Abdulhamid continues:

"In order to save their belief, call to the Islamic order, and foil the plans of the enemies; Bediuzzaman was the means of Muslims in Turkey finding new life, and their being shaped according to a Divine mould, within the context of the contemporary struggles of civilization in the modern world."[46]

He then says:

"Doubtless, he wanted to renew the lives of Muslims within the context of the present time and place and struggle of civilizations, in the light of the truths and leadership of the Qur'an, under the direction of God's Messenger (PBUH), in accordance with the elevated values described in the works of the *mujahid* scholars of the past."[47]

And so, was Bediuzzaman one of the Regenerators of Religion or was he not? Before answering this question I say this: a reforming renewer has to repulse Islam's enemies, and to revive the cause of upholding the Word of God and renew religion at a time when the Umma is corrupted and Islam is 'a stranger,' and its enemies are trying to extinguish the Islamic and religious spirit. If Islam comes to be only a name and the Qur'an just a form and the mosques just a convention, there has to be someone who will strive to the utmost to resist its enemies and struggle against them with all his strength and to establish the light of belief in the hearts of the Muslims. Now I ask again: did Bediuzzaman not bear these qualities? Indeed, he did. Now you can decide on the rest! He was a regenerator of religion, was he not? Muhsin 'Abdulhamid supplies the answer:

"Without any doubt he was a true regenerator of religion. For his call is neither to return to the past, nor to remain in the present. He believes that the Islamic movement and Islamic civilization and its thought should be renewed and raised to the level reached by civilization in the century in question."[48]

Iqbal's position was similar. He knew the remedies for the sicknesses of despair, sorrow, and fear, which were besetting the Muslim Umma. He described these sicknesses as killing life and eliminating belief in the affirmation of Divine unity. He said: "Know yourself! Then be effaced on the road of salvation within the Umma." Iqbal perpetually called on Muslims to awaken and regain their pride and dignity. This included constant change in accordance with the principles of the Shari'a and the liberation of Islamic thought. He therefore declared a fierce war on sufism and the sufi orders, and endeavoured to prove that a monastic class of this sort opened up the way to negating the Shari'a, and the laws of other religions.

Iqbal rejected the materialist values of Western civilization. The stance he

45. Muḥsin 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, *Mutakallim al-'Aṣr al-Ḥadīth*, 96.
46. Ibid., 98.
47. Ibid., 104.
48. Ibid.

adopted in the face of Western colonialism in the Muslim lands was marked by its resistance to their atrocities and cunning activities, and wrongs they committed. He introduced many new things into the lives of Muslims in India, he tried to draw them to the true path of Islam, explain its truths, fill their hearts with belief, and to instill in them the wish to solve all their problems courageously.

In conclusion: In this paper I have attempted to study Bediuzzaman's personality, set forth his views, give details of his extraordinary and exemplary character, and to say something in particular about his position among the Islamic scholars and thinkers who carry the standard of the Islamic cause. We saw that he spent all his life on guiding the sons and peoples of the Muslim Umma, striving to rekindle the light of their belief, to illuminate the road before them, revive Qur'anic life, and protect them with immaterial, cultural armour against materialist and atheistic ideas.

Doubtless, this paper is in need of deeper breaths, more penetrating views, and continuous efforts, for studies are needed which portray Bediuzzaman's personality in its entirety and depict it comprehensively and clearly.

It is my hope that this panel will form one more step on this way, immortalizing 'Allama Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's memory, who was the expounder of the Qur'an, and the Wonder of the Age.

* * *

The Treatise On Frugality

Sabahaddin Zaim

Throughout his life, Bediuzzaman strove to save belief and spread Islam, and resisting all oppression, on the one hand to display the attributes and conduct of a believer, and on the other to develop all the elements necessary for shaping society according to Islamic principles. He thus trained the ring of sincere people who gathered around him, and planted them throughout society, like shoots. These shoots grew and multiplied till finally they spread throughout the country and the world. His works were offered in various languages for the benefit of different peoples. The ideas Bediuzzaman put forward in all his works are based on the Qur'an and Sunna. To put it another way, he strove to expound and set forth the Qur'an and Sunna in a way this age would understand.

The subject of my paper today is Bediuzzaman's Treatise On Frugality.* It

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Professor Sabahaddin Zaim was born in İştip in 1926, and graduated from the Political Science Faculty of Ankara University in 1947, and from its Law Faculty in 1950. He taught in the Economics Faculty of Istanbul University from 1953-1989, and in many other universities, including Malik Abdulaziz University, 1980-2; Cornell University, USA, 1955-7. Among the many other posts in which he has served: Director of the Select Committee of the Islamic Development Bank, 1977-8; Consultant on Islamic banking to the Islamic Conference; on the teaching staff of the Türk-İş Trade Union College, 1965-76; member of the Consulting Committee on Islamic Economics of the International Abdulaziz Univ., 1978-82; Board of Trustees of Ankara Middle East Technical University, 1977-9; Board of Trustees of the International Islamic Univ., Islamabad; Society For International Industrial Relations; Society For Turkish-Libyan Friendship; Society of the Turkish-Saudi Arabian Friendship. He has published numerous notable articles and books on Islamic economics and on economic cooperation between Islamic countries. The chief of these are: *Avrupa Ortak Pazarı ve Türkiye* (The European Common Market and Turkey), 1970; *Türkiye'de Nüfus Meselesi* (The Population Question in Turkey), 1973; *İslâm'ın İktisadî Görüşü* (Islam's Economic View), 1987l; *İslâm, İnsan, Ekonomi* (Islam, Man, Economics), 1992; *Türk ve İslâm Dünyasının Yeniden Yapılanması* (The Remaking of the Turkish and Islamic World), 1993.

* *İktisad Risalesi* (The Nineteenth Flash). *Lem'alar*, Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1986, 134-42 / *The Flashes Collection* [English trans.], Sözler Publications 1995, 189-199. [Tr.]

will be useful to mention the following matter before embarking on the analysis and explanation of the treatise. Bediuzzaman based all his explanations and discussions on the Qur'an and Sunna, so when studying economic subjects he relied on the same sources and based his ideas on them. Explanation and analysis of economic matters based on the Qur'an and Sunna is now called Islamic economics. Thus, the ideas Bediuzzaman discussed about economic matters are investigations and analyses within the framework of Islamic economics. If we consider the subject in this sense, The Treatise On Frugality discusses one section of Islamic economics, and that is the Islamic model of consumption. Bediuzzaman touches on various questions related to Islamic economics in his other works, expounding and elucidating them in the light of Qur'anic verses and Hadiths. Basically, The Treatise On Frugality expounds the verse, *Eat and drink, but waste not by excess*(7:31), and explains why wastefulness in the consumption of things is unlawful, and its positive and negative effects. This is one of the chief questions facing mankind in the world today.

Wastefulness both upsets the balances of consumption and conservation on the individual level from the point of view of micro-economics, and affects the distribution of resources from the point of view of macro-economics, and the balance of conservation and consumption in the economy. It also paves the way for destroying the balances in the international field.

The modern world is dominated by an economy based on waste. People are continuously encouraged to consume. Consumption in excess of need is urged. Consumption of luxury goods is on the increase, and artificial needs are created by means of advertising. Instead of things being repairable and durable, the trend is for them to be used then thrown away. Due to the use of plastics, and as a result of the formula "use and throw away," both the environment and nature are being polluted, and resources are being exhausted. It is consumerism based on waste that lies at the bottom of the environmental problems today.

In consequence of the balance of income being destroyed through increased income from interest and decrease of *zakat*, there is an increased tendency among the super-rich rentier classes towards luxury and extravagance, and production resources are being directed towards meeting their demands; methods of production are developing in that direction. On the other hand, insufficient resources are being allotted for the production of the essential goods to meet the essential needs of the masses with low incomes, and the balance of supply and demand is being spoiled, and since production is insufficient, prices are increasing in the face of excessive demand. For the flexibility of demand is low in essential goods. Despite this, it cannot meet the primary essential needs. However, since consumption is being continuously encouraged through the development of advertising, credit, bank cards, etc., and people are being encouraged by advertising to consume more, newer, and more highly developed goods, the balance of income and expenditure in the family budgets of the great masses is being spoilt. As a result of this, individuals and states are going into debt and in part losing their economic freedom. Those who give in to the compelling desires

of their instinctual souls to consume, are obliged to sacrifice their dignity, and if necessary their honour, and even their religious and spiritual sensibilities. It is for this reason that bribery, preferential treatment, embezzlement, and adultery are increasing, and the family is breaking apart. One has to seek the effects of these misdemeanours at the base of inflation and foreign trade deficits, which beset the whole world.

These imbalances also affect ideologies, and were the cause of the emergence of socialist and marxist ideas. The world split into two, capitalist and socialist, and it was fought over tooth and nail. But since the basic rule of action in consumption, 'homo economicus,' did not change, wastefulness was not prevented in either system. In the socialist system, they tried through forced measures to make luxury and wastefulness widespread and to balance them. But this time too, since their production was unsuccessful, the macro-balances could not be maintained, despite current planning. In short, at the base of these deficiencies lie the habit of wastefulness, and lack of gratitude and contentment.

Thus, the principles that Islam brought produce the model of a Muslim who tries to regulate his consumption by rules based on the Qur'an and Sunna. Bediuzzaman expressed these very succinctly in his Treatise On Frugality.

Bediuzzaman puts the matter as follows in his treatise:

Man is charged with offering thanks while benefiting from the bounties bestowed by his Creator, and when using and consuming them. One who is grateful recognizes the bounties given to him by God, and knows their worth, and thinking of his fellow men, uses them to the extent of his need and in relation to it. According to Ghazzali's categorization, production activities may divided into three groups:

1) Production of essential goods: These cover production of all goods and services which preserve man's five basic attributes, which are belief, life, reason, productivity, and ownership of wealth.

2) Production which facilitates life: The production of these is not necessary for the preservation and continuation of the five basic attributes mentioned above, but are production activities which eliminate the difficulties and hardships of life, and increase its comforts.

3) Production activities which raise the quality of life: Rather than ensuring comfort, these are related to the production of goods and services which gratify the aesthetic sense, and senses of beauty and art.

According to another classification, needs may be divided into seven groups: 1) food; 2) clothing; 3) expenditure; 4) health; 5) education; 6) (social, economic, and administrative) security; 7) transport. Of these, individuals work to secure the first three through their own efforts and enterprise. While organs responsible for the order of society are charged with securing the last four. These responsible organs may be either central or local government or various public institutions, or they may be foundations or trusts founded to serve society in God's way. These are also called the third sector, in addition to the private and

public sectors. These functions may be met either by individuals, by means of *zakat* or charity, or by public organs, by means of taxes and *zakat*.

Thus, the wealthy believers and affirmers of Divine unity in a society are charged, while meeting their own needs, to do so to a reasonable extent, and to offer what is left over of their means for the benefit of their fellows who do not have such means. For God's Messenger (PBUH) said that one of the types of people that God will not forgive is "he who is unaware of the responsibities he has towards others." There are numerous verses of the Qur'an and Hadiths on this subject. We may mention some of these immediately.

Qur'anic verses

1) *And the likeness of those who spend their substance, seeking to please God and to strengthen their souls, is as a garden, high and fertile; heavy rain falls on it but makes it yield a double increase of harvest, and if it receives not heavy rain, light moisture suffices it. God sees well whatever you do.* (2:265)

2) *Whatever of good you give benefits your own souls, and you shall only do so seeking the face of God. Whatever good you give shall be rendered back to you, and you shall not be dealt with unjustly.* (2:272)

3) *[Charity is] for those in need, who, in God's cause are restricted [from travel], and cannot move about in the land, seeking [for trade and work]: the ignorant man thinks, because of their modesty, that they are free from want. You shall know them by their [unfailing] mark: they beg not importunately from all and sundry, and whatever of good you give be assured God knows it well.* (2:273)

4) *Those who [in charity] spend of their goods by night and by day, in secret and in public, have their reward with the Sustainer; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.* (2:274)

5) *God will deprive usury of all blessing, but will give increase for deeds of charity; for he loves not creatures ungrateful and wicked.* (2:276)

6) *O You who believe! Spend out of [the bounties] we have provided for you, before the Day comes when no bargaining [will avail], nor friendship nor intercession.* (2:254)

7) *The parable of those who spend their substance in the way of God is that of a grain of corn; it grows seven ears, and each ear has a hundred grains. God gives manifold increase to whom He pleases; and God cares for all and He knows all things.* (2:261)

Hadiths

1) "Whoever strives to help his brother, God will help him."

2) "Assist one another is good and righteousness, but avoid helping each other in sin and evil."

3) "If in a country any person dies of hunger, all the people of the country are responsible."

4) "The best of men is the one most useful to men."

So long as people's essential needs are not met in a society when directing resources towards production, its authorities should beware of gratifying needs that are in second and third place. In today's world, everyday hundreds of thousands of people die because they cannot meet their essential needs. For people whose stomachs are full feel strangers towards their neighbours who are hungry. However, God's Messenger (PBUH) said: "If a person feels unconcerned while his neighbour is suffering hunger and deprivation and he has the means to rectify it, he is not one of us." Bediuzzaman says the following in explaining this matter:

> "Also, at this time of poverty and hardship, the distress those with consciences feel at the anguish of the hungry and needy sours any pleasure to be had from unlawfully acquired money. During strange times such as these, as far as doubtful goods are concerned, one has to make do with them to the minimum degree necessary. For according to the rule, 'Necessity is determined according to its extent,' when compelled to, illicit goods may be taken to the minimum degree necessary, not more. Someone in dire need may eat dead meat, but he may not fill his stomach with it. He may only eat enough not to die. Also, more cannot be eaten with unspoilt pleasure in the presence of a hundred people who are hungry."

It was for this reason that in former times, believers and those who affirm God's unity would eat nothing openly in the street, in order to not to stimulate the appetites of the people around, and would not even carry foodstuffs openly; they would cover them. With this idea, the fortunate people who have the means to satisfy their needs should know the worth of this and constantly thank their Creator. In our daily lives while meeting these needs of ours, the thanks we offer our Creator, in Bediuzzaman's words "shows respect for the bounty and is profitable." This is called 'frugality,' 'thrift,' or 'economy.' One who does not practise this, is wasteful. Wastefulness is the opposite of thanks "and slights the bounty and causes loss." Since this is so, while eating the bread we buy and put on our tables, we should think first of this bounty's being sown in the ground, then becoming wheat, then being milled and made into flour, then being baked and distributed, all of which is brought about through the co-operation and labour of numerous people. Eating it with this awareness, we will be "showing respect" for this Divinely bestowed bounty and "making it profitable." That is to say, we should not waste and degrade it by leaving half of it on our plates and throwing it away, thus "slighting it and causing loss."

Today, however, as I said, let alone the very rich countries, in societies like ours which are middling rich, we see, hear, and read that every day thousands of loaves are not eaten and left-overs are thrown away. This is what is known as wastefulness; it "slights the bounty and causes loss." While what we should do while consuming bounties is "show respect" for them, which is profitable. Our believing forefathers knew of this, and would put any bread that fell to the ground to their foreheads and kiss it, and would be careful that not a single crumb fell to the ground when they were eating.

This is what Bediuzzaman calls 'frugality' (*iktisad*). The science of economics (*iktisad*), which is so popular to day, is based on this meaning. If we recall

then, that in the books of economics, economics is defined as the science which investigates the most efficient ways limited resources can meet the unlimited needs of people, we shall have understood better the aptness and depth of Bediuzzaman's definition.

If we divide economics or frugality, which explains "profitably showing respect" for the bounties God bestows, into its various elements, we see that it comprises six important attributes:

1) "Frugality expresses the meaning of thanks"

Man does not consist of only a body, he should therefore avoid wastefulness and practise frugality when meeting his essential daily needs. For he feels a pleasure welling up from the depths of his spirit when he offers thanks to his Creator for the bounties bestowed on him, the chief of which is the need for food.

2) Frugality "shows respect towards the Divine mercy manifested in the bounties"

Man should think of the bounties offered to him as Divine mercy, in the awareness that like himself, the universe is created and all its beings have been appointed to man's command by the Creator. For Almighty God has guaranteed man's sustenance, and has determined who will receive plentiful sustenance, and who will receive scanty sustenance. Someone who is aware of this should consider the bounty he receives to be Divine mercy.

3) Frugality "is the cause of plenty"

Because of their recognition of Divine mercy and thanks for the bounties He bestows, God Almighty makes abundant and plentiful the bounties of those who practise frugality, while he takes away the plenty from the wasteful who do not practise frugality. Bediuzzaman relates an anecdote on this subject:

> "...Nine years ago I visited a fortunate town. Since it was winter, I could not see its sources of wealth. Several times the town's Mufti, may God have mercy on him, said to me, 'Our people are poor.' These words touched me. For the following five or six years, I felt continual pity for the people of the town. Eight years later in the summer, I again visited it. I looked at the gardens and recalled the words of the late Mufti. 'Glory be to God!', I said, 'These gardens' crops are far greater than the needs of the town. Its people should be very rich.' I was amazed. Then I understood through remembering a fact which has never deceived me and is my guide in understanding other truths, that the abundance and plenty had disappeared due to wastefulness and excess, so that although the town possessed such sources of wealth, the late Mufti used to say: 'Our people are poor.' Indeed, just as giving *zakat* and being frugal and economical is proven by experience to be the cause of increase and plenty in goods and possessions, so too are there innumerable events showing that wastefulness and failure to give *zakat* cause increase and plenty to be taken away."

The situation in the Islamic world today is generally thus. There is poverty and deprivation in the midst of wealth. Although today the Islamic world possesses considerable resources, due to lack of thanks and contentment among the

poor and wastefulness and extravagance among the rich, no co-operation has been secured through the division of labour, and it is falling into debt and becoming dependent on the swindlers. Within the Islamic world are the richest and poorest countries, and both rich and poor are sunk into debt. For while the Muslims should be brothers, they are arming against each other in their mutual hostility, and since they cannot produce the arms themselves, they buy them and go into debt, and losing their pride at the hands of the arms-dealers, are degraded and insulted.

4) To practise frugality while meeting the need for food is health-giving from the medical point of view, besides affording spiritual benefits and other profitable aspects

The consumption of food in a reasonable and necessary amount assists in carrying the body, but if excess is consumed the body carries it. Excessive food makes the body into a porter, wearing it out. Frugality "is health-giving for the body, like a diet." In Bediuzzaman's words:

> "I concentrate the science of medicine in two lines, the best word is the shortest; when you eat, eat little, and do not eat again for four or five hours. Health lies in digestion. That is to say, eat so much as you can digest easily. The heaviest and most tiring thing for your stomach and yourself is to eat many things one on top of the other."

If we note the feeding habits of some of us or most of us today, we see that rather than the food we take in carrying the body, the body has to carry the food, and to store it without digesting it. If we recall that the accumulation of fats and so on formed through the excessive intake of food, that is, wastefulness in eating, and through excessive nutrients like sugar, chloresterol, and total liquids, is the cause of various illnesses, we shall understand this fourth virtue of practising frugality in food and avoiding wastefulness.

5) Fifth virtue

In Bediuzzaman's words, frugality "saves a person from the degradation of what is in effect begging, and so is a cause of self-respect." "According to the Hadith the meaning of which is: '*He who is thrifty will not have family difficulties as regards livelihood*,' the frugal and economical person will not suffer undue trouble and hardship in supporting his family. There are countless proofs that the consequence of frugality is plenty and good living."

Bediuzzaman says:

> "For instance, I have seen myself and I can say according to the testimony of those who have befriended and assisted me that through being frugal, I have sometimes seen a tenfold increase, and so have my friends. Even, nine years ago—and now it is thirty, a number of the tribal leaders who were exiled to Burdur together with me did their best to make me accept their *zakat* so that I would not suffer privation and humiliation through lack of money. I said to those rich leaders: 'Although I have very little money, I am frugal and economical and I am accustomed to being content with little. I am richer than you.' I refused their repeated and insistent offers. It is worth noting that two years later some of those who had offered me their *zakat* were in debt because they had not been frugal. Thanks be to God, seven years on from that, through the plenty resulting from frugality that small amount of money was still sufficient for me; it did not degrade me, nor compel me to present my needs to the people, nor make me deviate from my way of self-sufficiency and being independent of people, which is one of the principles of my life. Someone who is not frugal is certain to be abased and reduced to poverty and in effect to begging. At this time, money, the means of wastefulness and extravagance, is extremely expensive. Sometimes a person sells his honour and self-respect and bribes are taken to receive it. Sometimes the sacred things of religion are sold, then some inauspicious money received in return. That is to say, material goods worth ten *kurush* are received in return for an immaterial loss of one hundred *liras*."

It is seen if noted carefully that the countries that are poor today, or consider themselves to be thus, have lost much of their national sovereignty and national pride because of their huge external debts, and suffer the abasement of in effect being beggars due to their continuously having to incur debts. The reason for this is that the people of those countries and those who have been appointed to govern them do not practise frugality and contentment, and get carried away by wastefulness. Whereas God's Messenger (PBUH) prayed to God: "O God! I seek refuge with You from committing sins and incurring debts." It is seen here that becoming indebted is held to be equivalent to committing sins, so long as there is no necessity, of course. Believers and those who affirm Divine unity should therefore conform to the following principles in their consumption, suitably to the Qur'an and Sunna:

1) In their consumption, they will not spend their income on things that are illict, and will increase their knowledge of those areas that are lawful. God Almighty commands the following in a verse, *O you who believe! eat of the good things that We have provided for you and be grateful to God...*(2:172; 2:168; 5:87-8; 6:142; 16:144)

2) In their consumption, they will avoid luxury and conspicuous consumption. It says in the verse *Nor those who spend of their substance, to be seen of men, but have no faith in God and the Last Day; if any take the Evil One for their intimate, what a dreadful intimate he is!*(4:38; 2:64; 2:70)

The Muslim will live according to the standard of living of the society in which he lives, and will not consume ostentatiously in a way that will make the poor covetous or excite their envy.

3) In areas in which consumption is lawful, they limit it to meeting essential needs. They will endeavour to preserve the bounties to the last drop or crumb, and will not waste them. For God does not love those who are wasteful.

4) Neither will they be extravagant and wasteful, nor will they incur debts so long as they are not compelled to do so.

6) Practising frugality allows one to experience the pleasure in bounties

In a comparison, Bediuzzaman likened the sense of taste, the sense which receives pleasure, to a doorkeeper, and the stomach to the master, and says that if the gifts which arrive at the palace for the master are worth a hundred liras, only five liras would be assigned to for the doorkeeper, by way of a tip.

Here, Bediuzzaman is alluding to the famous law of economics, the law of decreasing utility. If we practise frugality in consumption, the usefulness or utility of marginal consumption units is high. If we practise wastefulness and increase consumption, in accordance with the law of decreasing utility, the utility of the marginal units decreases, diminishing to nothing the more wastefulness increases, even becoming less than nothing.

Bediuzzaman continues as follows:

> "However, if a person is frugal and restricts and limits his needs to the essential, according to the implied meaning of the verse, *Indeed, it is God Who gives all sustenance, Lord of all power and strength* (51:58), and the explicit meaning of the verse, *And there is no moving creature on the earth but its sustenance is provided by God* (11:6), he will find enough sustenance to live on in unexpected ways."

In Bediuzzaman's words:

> "Out of His perfect generosity, Almighty God makes a poor man understand the pleasure of His bounty the same as a rich man, and a beggar the same as a king. Indeed, the pleasure a poor man obtains from a dry piece of black bread through hunger and being frugal is greater than the pleasure a king or a rich man obtains from the choicest baklava eaten with the weariness and lack of appetite resulting from excess."

It is for this reason that for those who do not live in conformity with Islamic rules, income and sustenance are in inverse proportion. As income increases, sustenance decreases. In the Qur'an, Almighty God guarantees the sustenance of all creatures. Here, Bediuzzaman expounds the verse in reply to an implied question. That is, if God has guaranteed people's food, why do hundreds of thousands of them die of hunger? He replies as follows:

> "One is true sustenance, which is enough to subsist on. As the verse decrees, this sustenance is guaranteed by the Sustainer. So long as man's inclination towards evil does not interfere, he will find this essential sustenance under any circumstances. He will not be compelled to sacrifice his religion, or his honour, or his self-respect.
>
> "The second sort is metaphorical sustenance. With this, through abuse, inessential needs become like essential ones, and through the calamity of custom and tradition, people become addicted to them and cannot give them up. Since this sustenance is not guaranteed by the Sustainer, obtaining it is extremely expensive —and especially at this time. These unfruitful, inauspicious goods are obtained with first of all sacrificing the self-respect and accepting degradation, and sometimes stooping to what is in effect begging, kissing the feet of the vile, and sometimes sacrificing the sacred things of religion, which are the light of eternal life."

The calamities suffered by the poor in the world today is due to their reducing their essential needs to the level of "metaphorical" sustenance, or supposing "metaphorical sustenance" to be essential. As in numerous backward countries, in Turkey today goods are imported from abroad, which gives rise to debts, and are of the category of "metaphorical sustenance" rather than that of "true sustenance." As a result of advertising, custom, and lack of contentment, we attempt to import these goods, which are in fact to facilitate life or beautify it. But our

true productive power, that is, our income, is insufficient to buy them. Because of our lack of contentment, we buy the goods by going into debt. And the more we go into debt, the more we sink into the bog of interest, and the poorer we become. In numerous backward countries, 'false sustenance' was forced on the rulers by the colonialists, if only in part. For example, in some African countries, the land, which should have been used to produce essential foods like wheat and maize, was turned to the production of cocoa etc., and the people were made dependent on the colonialist power to obtain their true sustenance.

It is important when discussing frugality to mention an important difference, and that is the difference between frugality and stinginess.

7) The difference between frugality and stinginess

God does not like either wastefulness or stinginess. In Bediuzzaman's words,

> "It is surprising but some dissolute and extravagant people accuse the frugal and economical of being 'mean' and 'stingy.' God forbid! Frugality is dignity and generosity. Stinginess and meanness are the inner face of the apparently noble qualities of the wasteful and extravagant. "

Avoiding wastefulness leads to being economical, and being economical prevents us being entirely without means at the moment of need. A bright penny is for a dark day. In the following verse, Almighty God commands: *The Evil One threatens you with poverty and bids you to conduct unseemly. God promises you forgiveness and bounties; and God cares for all and He knows all things.* (2:268)

> "Abdullah b. Umar, who was one of the famous Companions of the Prophet known as 'the seven Abdullahs,' was the greatest and most important of the sons of the Caliph Umar, *Faruq al-A'zam*, and one of the most distinguished and learned of the Companions. One day while shopping in the market, in order to be economical and to preserve the confidence and integrity on which trade depends, he disputed hotly over something worth a few *kurush*. ... 'In the market it was not stinginess, but conduct arising from frugality; it was perfectly reasonable, and to preserve confidence and honesty, which are the basis and spirit of commerce. And the conduct in my house arose from the compassion of my and the perfection of my spirit. Neither was the first stinginess, nor the second immoderateness.' Alluding to this, Imam Abu Hanifa said: 'There can be no excess in good, just as there is no good in excess.' That is to say, just as in good works and benevolence there can no excess or wastefulness—so long as they are for the deserving, so there is no good at all in wastefulness and immoderateness."

The result of wastefulness: the incitement of greed

8) Wastefulness leads to greed, and greed has three consequences:

1. Dissatisfaction.

2. Disappointment and loss.

3. It destroys sincerity and damages actions in regard to the hereafter.

1. Dissatisfaction destroys endeavour and enthusiasm for work

Bediuzzaman continues:

> "[Greed] causes the dissatisfied person to complain instead of giving thanks, and

makes him lazy... Consumers increase and producers decrease as a result of wastefulness and lack of economy. Everyone fixes his eye on the government's door. Then industry, trade, and agriculture, on which social life depend, decrease. And the nation declines and is impoverished."

It is for this reason that in Islam games of chance, gambling, etc., and easy gains, and feathering one's nest are forbidden. (5:90-1)

Increased dissatisfaction and complaint instead of thanks, and abstention from labour gave rise to socialism. While giving up having few possessions which were lawful and seeking to own many possessions with little trouble, and unlawfully, gave rise to capitalism.

2. The second result of greed is disappointment and loss

"Licit sustenance is in inverse proportion to ability and will. For the more children increase in ability and will, the more their sustenance decreases, the further it is from them, and the more difficult to digest. According to the Hadith, '*Contentment is an unfailing treasure,*' contentment is a treasury of good living, while greed is a mine of loss and abasement."

3. Greed destroys sincerity and damages actions in regard to the hereafter

"For if a God-fearing person suffers from greed, he will desire the regard of others. And someone who considers the regard of others cannot have complete sincerity. This consequence is extremely important and worth noticing."

The above is very noteworthy and important. In conclusion:

"**In Short:** Excess and wastefulness lead to lack of contentment. And lack of contentment destroys enthusiasm for work; it causes laziness, opens the door to complaining about life, and makes the dissatisfied person complain continuously. Also, it destroys sincerity, and opens the door to hypocrisy. And it destroys self-respect, and points the way to begging.

"As for frugality and economy, these result in contentment. According to the Hadith, '*The contented person is respected, and the greedy person despised,*' a consequence of contentment is self-esteem. Also, it encourages effort and work. It increases enthusiasm, and leads to work. ... Moreover, the contentment arising from frugality opens the door of thanks and closes the door of complaint. Throughout his life, the contented person is thankful. And in so far as he is independent of others through his contentment, he does not seek their regard. The door of sincerity is opened, the door of hypocrisy closed."

* * *

Bediuzzaman and the Mysteries of Religion

Abdülkadir Badıllı

Foreword

As is affirmed and corroborated both by many predictive allusions,[1] and numerous exacting scholars, and his works, the Risale-i Nur, in which are solved hundreds of religious, scholarly, and sufistic questions, in respect of his scholarly personality and his way of service Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was a regenerator of religion and a solver of mysteries and difficulties. He was correct in all matters and disclosed the 'straight path,' which is direct and free of danger. He was also a guide who solved for the people of this age at the end of time, and in particular for Muslims, their religious, worldly, social, and political problems.

The above description is not exaggeration in reference to Bediuzzaman and his Risale-i Nur; it is accurate and correct. For the facts have been proven with sound evidence. It is enough to study the Risale-i Nur once in order to prove my assertion, on condition it is understood and the reader has some knowledge of the Islamic sciences.

While the fact is this, it has been seen and is to be seen that Muslims do not

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Abdülkadir Badıllı was born in Urfa in 1936. He studied the Qur'an and Ottoman Turkish under local teachers from the age of nine. He did not attend official schools; his 'school' was the Risale-i Nur. He learnt Arabic and Persian through his own efforts. He visited Bediuzzaman in 1953 in Isparta, and from then on stayed in Risale-i Nur 'Medrese's. He was imprisoned twice during Bediuzzaman's lifetime for reading the Risale-i Nur, and several times afterwards, and has been tried in court seventeen times on the same charge. He published *Âsâr-ı Bedi'iye* (all the works of the 'Old Said' collected into one volume). His chief works include: *Bediüzzaman Said-i Nursî, Mufassal Tarihçe-i Hayatı*, 3 vols., 1990; *Risale-i Nur'un Kudsi Kaynakları*, 1996; *al-Mathnawī al-'Arabī al-Nūrī* —trans. into Turkish, 1980; A history of the Risale-i Nur; *Küçük Sözler* and a short biography of Bediuzzaman —trans. into Kurdish.

1. The book *Sikke-i Tasdik-i Gaybî* (The Ratifying Stamp of the Unseen) testifies to this.

truly understand and know Bediuzzaman's person and way, and the Risale-i Nur, his culture and knowledge, or they have not grasped their nature and reality. So much so that even many well-known and distinguished scholars of religion consider the Risale-i Nur to be a repetition of the traditional questions of *kalām* and the fundamentals of belief. They therefore suppose the Risale-i Nur and the original, most valuable truths it contains to be knowledge that has long since been available. Whereas it is completely the opposite of this. Just as such a view and approach is not based on investigation, so it is deceptive and does not go beyond being a supposition taking one away from the truth.

Yes, those who study the Risale-i Nur closely know that its most original side and salient characteristic distinguishing it from the style and methods of former works of logic and *'ilm al-kalam*, is its proving the reality, elevated quality and naturalness of the questions and truths of Islamic belief within the matters themselves, evincing no need whatsoever for anything outside of them. I claim that this is a distinctive feature particular to the Risale-i Nur which has no predecessor. In addition, the Risale-i Nur weighs up on the scales of reason, understanding, and perception, the questions of Islam and belief, and particularly all the matters related to the fundamentals of belief, and has the capacity to satisfy and convince the human faculties.

Thus, since the true nature of the Risale-i Nur was not understood and known to the desired degree, despite being distinguished by the above characteristics as an inspired work, foremost its author, Ustad Bediuzzaman Hazretleri, published it at the outset with various striking names, in order to attract attention to them. Names like *Asâ-yı Mûsa* (The Staff of Moses), *Zülfikâr*, *Tılsımlar Mecmuası* (The 'Mysteries' —lit. 'Talisman'— Collection), *Siracü'n-Nûr* (The Light-Giving Lamp).

Secondly: He wrote that there are numerous predictions about the Risale-i Nur, that is, allusions informing that Bediuzzaman and these works would appear at this time, and he had them published in the collection *Sikke-i Tasdik-i Gaybî* (The Ratifying Stamp of the Unseen Collection).

Thirdly: For the same purpose he recorded some of the instances of grace and Divine assistance that were manifested in the work of publishing the Risale-i Nur, whether in hand-written copies or in other forms, and had them published.

Despite all these activities, one cannot say that the Risale-i Nur and its elevated truths have received the attention they deserve. Many things have prevented scholars, and particularly religious scholars, being drawn to it, not allowing them to appreciate its worth.

Thus, I want in this Symposium to rend the veil of familiarity that hinders chiefly the religious scholars, to which they have long since become accustomed, that is, to dispel their false assumption that "it is something we know about. It addresses not us but the young people of this time, and is useful for them." In the hope of banishing some of those things which prevent them directing their attention towards it, I want to present my paper "Bediuzzaman and the Mysteries of Religion." Success is only from God Almighty.

Introduction

The dictionary meaning of the word 'tılsım' does not refer to anything specific. It has generally been thus in the dictionaries and lexicons. However, it is a word that has been used occasionally in a technical sense with an allegorical or allusive meaning by literary figures and sufis, such as in the title *Esrār-ı Muṭalsım* (The Talismanic Mysteries). As a word referring to something vague, like 'elixir', it may also be an expression with a meaning like 'transmuting earth into gold.'

Bediuzzaman occasionally used the word 'tılsım' (here translated as 'mystery') in his works in the technical or allegorical sense, referring to "obscure meanings which are difficult to disclose and solve." For example, in the Seventh Word "which solves the obscure riddle (talisman) of creation;" in the Eighth Word, "... solve this world's talisman;" in the Eleventh Word, "If you want to understand a little about the talisman of the wisdom of the world and the riddle of man's creation...;" and in the Thirtieth Word, "As the key to the Divine Names, which are hidden treasures, the 'I' is also the key to the locked talisman of creation; it is a problem-solving riddle, a wondrous talisman." The word recurs in many places of the Risale-i Nur in this sense.

The word 'tılsım' was also given to the fact that the Risale-i Nur discloses a number of obscure truths of religion, the Qur'an, and Hadiths, which are difficult to solve, and this is our chief subject. That is, the fact that numerous obscure matters contained in the Qur'an and Hadith, the sacred sources of the Islamic religion, and in the science of *kalām* and sufism, and other works of Islam, which are sorts of interpretations of those sacred sources, —matters rational understanding of which is difficult, were completely solved in the Risale-i Nur. This is a matter of the very greatest importance.

We see that Bediuzzaman first noted these down in his defence speeches in Eskişehir Court, in 1935:

> "There is nothing in the universe more important than the mystery of belief (*īmān*), which is the supreme question of the universe and the greatest riddle (*tılsım*) in the creation of the world, that belief could made a tool of it. God forbid! Members of the Court! If this tortuous imprisonment concerned only my worldly life and my person, you can be sure that I would continue to be silent as I have these past ten years. But since it concerns the eternal life of many people and the Risale-i Nur, which expounds and solves of the mighty riddle (*tılsım*) of the universe, if I had a hundred heads and every day one was cut off, I still would not give up this mighty mystery..."[2]

2. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Lem'alar* (Ott. ed.), Istanbul n.p., n.d., 543.

I want here to give some sources I have been able to find as the result of a small investigation into the word '*tılsım*' and it use by sufis and literary figures:

Ottoman and Arabic lexicons: Raif Necdet, *Resimli Türkçe Kamus*, 511: "*Tılsim*: precaution, measure, power, effect. Tahir Ahmad-i Razi, *Tertib-i Kamusu'l-Muhit*, iii, 87: "It has been said that the word *tılsım* is not Arabic, but Persian, but in my opinion it is Arabic and is a word for hidden and unknowable mysteries. It is much used by sufis, in such terms as *Sırr-ı Mutalsım* and *Hijab-ı Mutalsım*. It plural is *talasim*..." For its use by sufis and poets, I looked at the *diwans* of Shaykh Ahmad-i Jazari and Shaykh Ahmad-i Hani, which were at hand: in the *diwan* of the former in *al-'Aqd al-Jawhari*, ii, 791, were lines meaning "It is understood that from pre-eternity **Overleaf** →

n various places in the Risale-i Nur, he writes that the Risale-i Nur has solved many mysteries of religion and that the works should be applauded from this point of view. It is appropriate to mention a few of these passages. In order, they are in *Sözler* (The Words), *Mektûbat* (Letters), *Lem'alar* (The Flashes Collection), *Şualar* (The Rays Collection), and following these, in *Barla Lahikası*, *Kastamonu Lahikası,* and the first and second volumes of *Emirdağ Lahikası.* A few of the most important of these, without following the order, are given below.[3]

Thus, in many places in the Risale-i Nur, its author, Bediuzzaman, stated completely sincerely and comfortably that the Risale-i Nur has solved and disclosed hundreds of obscure matters rational understanding of which is difficult. And these are not merely unsupported claims; he is able to prove categorically what he says, because for evidence he ascribes primarily to the Qur'an itself the disclosures the Risale-i Nur has made and its solving of the mysteries of religion. Then he says, being a shining mirror of the Qur'an, this aspect of the Risale-i Nur is a ray of the Qur'an at this time, manifested in its mirror. Similarly, in order to prove how the Risale-i Nur has proved these aspects of the world and religion that are mysteries, he wrote the following at the beginning of the work he published under the title of *Tılsımlar Mecmuası* (The Mysteries Collection), referring to universal subjects and treatises:

> "Through the effulgence of the Qur'an of Miraculous Exposition, which solves the vast and obscure riddle of the universe, the Risale-i Nur has solved and disclosed and proved and elucidated hundreds of those riddles and mysteries of the Qur'an, and the most significant part of them is included in this 'Mysteries Collection.'"

It was for this reason that we chose 'Bediuzzaman and the Mysteries of Religion' as the title of this paper. Only, I have not chosen to collect together the long treatises as Bediuzzaman did in The Mysteries Collection in order to prove his assertions in this matter, I have preferred another method. I want to bring together the most important and clearest of each of the hundreds of matters found in various places in the Risale-i Nur and the evidences that prove and corroborate each other, and listing them according to their degree, perform the service of further elucidating, commenting on, and completing them. Furthermore, how were all the questions that are solved in the Risale-i Nur explained, set out, and expressed in the Arabic originals and books of former Islamic writers, written previously to the Risale-i Nur? This will also be mentioned briefly, so that the matters the Risale-i Nur solved will become completely clear, and being known, it will make understood the extent of Bediuzzaman's knowledge, and his way and the service he performed, as well as his 'station' and the ways in which he was a Regenerator of Religion.

2. *Cont:* Almighty God appointed the way of love and affection for us. For us then, neither name, nor *tılsım*, nor amulet is of any avail." While on page 756 of the same work are lines meaning: "Even if there were a hundred 'houses' to explain our mysterious (*tılsımlı*) problem-solving state, still no sage (*ârif*) could elucidate it completely." For an excellent definition, see page 292 in the introduction of *Memuzin* by Shaykh Ahmad-i Hani, published in Iran.

3. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Emirdağ Lahikası*, Istanbul, Envar Neşriyat 1992, i, 47, 195; *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 209, 215; *Mektûbat*, 493; *Şualar*, 195, 271, 679, 742. [NOTE: WITH THE EXCEPTION OF TRANSLATED EDITIONS, ALL REFERENCES TO THE RISALE-I NUR IN THIS PAPER ARE ENVAR NEŞRIYAT, LATEST EDITION. Tr.]

The science of *kalām* and the Risale-i Nur

The opinions of professors of religion who have carried out particular research on this subject, support the view that the way of the Risale-i Nur is a "new method in the science of *kalām*." Two of these eminent scholars are Prof. Dr. Muhsin 'Abdulhamid (Professor of Qur'anic exegesis and *kalām* in Baghdad University), and Prof. Ahmad 'Abdurrahim al-Sayih (Professor of *'Aqida* and philosophy in the Faculty of *Usul al-Din* in al-Azhar University).

These two learned scholars have written articles setting out their ideas on the subject. Prof. Muhsin 'Abdulhamid's was published in Arabic in the magazine Nur-The Light, which is published in Istanbul, in the January, February, March (1995) number. Prof. al-Sayih has published two articles, one of which was published independently in Arabic. His second is in the book of the 1992 International Symposium on Bediuzzaman. We may also learn of the gist of the matter from the author himself.

Before explaining it, however, we should answer a question: Is the method by which, through the effulgence of the Qur'an, the Risale-i Nur solves "the obscure riddles" of the mysteries of religion and the universe a method followed by the science of *kalām*?

The Answer: At once and most definitely we say: No! For the traditional science of *kalām* had a classic form and method, and being based on material, rational principles, mostly used the weapons the sceptical philosophers hostile to religion themselves had developed, or accepting to be unshakeable their laws and rules, tried to prove the matters of Islamic belief with these 'outside' evidences. Bediuzzaman therefore considered a *kalām* method of this sort to be defective. However, he accepted that in former times, the science of *kalām* had defended the tenets of Islamic belief and had performed important functions, particularly in the matter of proving God's necessary existence.[4]

We may learn from Bediuzzaman himself the nature of the difference between the methods of *kalām* and the principles of the other Islamic philosophers, which addressed only the reason, and the extremely effective and productive principles which Bediuzzaman discovered and took without intermediary from the pure source of the Qur'an.[5]

In the last passage, the approach is different, but if studied carefully, it is seen that by saying about the Risale-i Nur "it comprises teachings of the luminous, true science of *kalām*," it is stating unmistakably the clear difference between the style and method of the Risale-i Nur and that of *kalām*. That is, to put it briefly, the Risale-i Nur is a science of *kalām* spring from the Qur'an, it is different, it is luminous, etc.

Expressions of this sort are to be found in many places in the Risale-i Nur. For example, in The Supreme Sign, and in the question and answer on page 442 of *Mektûbat* (Letters p. 516), and in the final part of *Hücumat-ı Sitte* (The Six

4. *Şualar*, 141; *Sözler*, 683 / *The Words* [English trans.], Istanbul, Sözler Publications 1993, 715.

5. *Sözler*, 411 / *The Words*, 423; *Mektûbat*, 333 / *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Letters 1928-1932* [English trans.], Sözler Publications 1994, 391; *Barla Lahikası*, 283.

Attacks, Letters p. 499). It is stated here definitely and unreservedly that even if the Risale-i Nur's method and manner of exposition, which is based entirely on evidence and proof, bears superficial resemblances to the science of *kalām*, it certainly does not possess its classic characteristics. This matter will be more clearly understood below, where we include some examples from the Risale-i Nur.

It is my guess that the differences between Bediuzzaman's entirely authentic Qur'anic way and the methods of other Islamic thinkers and scholars of *kalām* have now been understood. Nevertheless, a clearer understanding may be gained from the sections below which contain explanations about questions related to religion and the universe.

The mysteries and their solution

The 'mysteries of religion' which the Risale-i Nur has solved are truly numerous; they run to hundreds. In brief, these mysteries are as follows: the purpose of the creation of the universe, known as the riddle of creation, and particularly the reason for the creation of mankind; the wisdom and purpose in the constant observable destruction and reconstruction of beings, their being brought into existence and annihilated, which is necessitated by the continuous creation in the universe; the certain proof of the existence and unity of the universe's Creator, and the power of His sovereignty, which is without assistant or deputy; the creation of all things being as easy for Divine power as one thing; the rational, readily comprehensible proof of bodily resurrection, which forms part of belief in the resurrection of the dead, the last judgement, and the hereafter, and the solving of this mystery; the scholarly proof of the existence of the angels and spirit beings, and the fact that they are creatures charged with duties; the rational and scholarly proof of the Prophet's (PBUH) Ascension, which he made both physically and in the spirit; the solving of the obscure and 'mysterious' aspects of many questions related to belief and its tenets; and proofs supported by the most penetrating evidence of both the Qur'an's miraculousness, and that its injunctions and truths are in conformity with knowledge, reason, and the natural disposition of things.

Of the many questions of religion and subtle points of belief like the above, summaries which are listed in order of importance in this paper, (I was able to prepare only thirty-three), doubtless the most important and extensive of them will be the sections on belief and its tenets. This subject is also contained in other matters. For instance, by proving in scholarly fashion a Hadith about the lifespan of the world, Muslims' belief will be strengthened and burnished.

First, belief and its tenets

The beliefs of the Islamic religion vary in importance. This is shown in the '*Āmantu*' or Islamic creed, which makes it clear that one has to believe without doubting in God's existence and unity, in His 'essential' and 'negating' attributes, and all His Most Beautiful Names, as well as His Godhead, dominicality and being the sole being fit to be worshipped, and one has to try to recognize the activity of the manifestations of all His Names. Since the Risale-i Nur attaches

the greatest importance to the evidence the Qur'an offers for all these beliefs, and to the rational and reasonable proof of them, a number of examples of each are given in this paper.

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Before setting out and describing the mysteries of religion which are solved in most original fashion in the Risale-i Nur, I want to try to explain a number of points:

1) On a superficial perusal, one face —like the two faces of a mirror— of the religious, scholarly, and sufistic questions solved in the Risale-i Nur, might be considered similar to the matters expounded in former works. But if the other face is studied attentively, it will be seen certainly that the Risale-i Nur's author at no time took matters that had already been solved and repeated them. For Bediuzzaman always observed the scholarly principle, "It is not permissible to scribble things about a question that has already been solved and write treatises about it."

2) No one can deny that the learned Islamic scholars of former times wrote brilliant treatises and works about the questions of Islam, especially concerning Arabic and rhetoric. But doubtlessly every age has its own system of thought, method, and weapon of struggle; so too each has a style particular to it and system in accordance with which it strives. For example, if the weapons that the mighty Ghazzali used are inadequate in the face of the doubts and scepticism of the enemies of religion this age, the deficiency is not Ghazzali's —God forbid!— it lies in the times. For like all thinkers, he was the son of his time.

Bediuzzaman alluded to this point in *Kastamonu Lahikası*,[6] and in the piece called *Konuşan Yalnız Hakikattır* or *Yalnız Hakikat Konuşuyor*,[7] which he wrote in 1951. A summary is this:

> "Every age the All-Wise Qur'an gives a weapon to its students which is appropriate to the age. Moreover, those who suppose that everything can be solved through brilliant eloquence and style are wrong. Feelings like sincerity, self-sacrifice, and so on, have to play apart..."

3) The spiritual light and weapon or method of striving that Bediuzzaman received directly from the Qur'an differs from those of former erudite scholars on several points. The most striking of these is that without describing the form of the doubts and hesitations about questions, that is, without describing them in detail, Hazret-i Ustad proved rationally and in scholarly fashion the truth and indubitableness of those matters pertaining to the Qur'an and religion, thus eradicating and destroying the doubts.

One of the most important of similar points is that the mysteries that are demonstrated below are solved by Bediuzzaman according to a completely original and new method. This will be seen, so here we suffice with this much.

6. *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 182.
7. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, ii, 104-7.

The Mysteries

In this paper I have chosen only thirty-three out of the many sorts of 'mysteries of religion,' which I shall define and describe as far as I am able. If Divine assistance is forthcoming, I am thinking of complementing the mysteries in this paper with the others solved by the Risale-i Nur, and publishing them altogether in a single work. But for now we pass on to proving the list of thirty-three mysteries.

Tawhid (The Affirmation of Divine Unity)

First Mystery: God's existence

The basis of this matter, belief in God, is the greatest, most brilliant, and most firmly established truth in the universe. All the revealed scriptures and prophets and all religions have proved and proclaimed it. Moreover, the logical proofs and evidences of the great scholars raised in the Muslim Umma, the scholars of *kalām* and the philosophers, and particularly the Risale-i Nur of Bediuzzaman this age, have demonstrated this matter with such scholarly and logical proofs that it is not possible to doubt it. In any event, the rational belief of intelligent beings in the universe in the truths of Godhead, dominicality and the One fit to be worshipped, and their all acting in accordance with that belief in their different ways, forms another proof of it. It is because of this that, even if defined wrongly, the sense of worshipping some object has always dominated man's nature. All the different religions, beliefs, and forms of worship demonstrate this truth clearly. Basically, there is no need to dwell on this matter, since it has been solved. That is, it is superfluous to discuss it in this paper, for it is proved as clearly as daylight in the Risale-i Nur, and is there for all to see. However, certain aspects of the attributes like Divine unity, oneness, knowledge, will, and power, about which one is obliged to have knowledge in order to believe, as well as aspects of certain matters related to them, all need to be solved. I shall therefore attempt to set forth in list form the original explanations of them in the Risale-i Nur, as well as their clear proofs, the comparisons illustrating them, their clarity in respect of reason and knowledge, and how matters like these have been solved in the Risale-i Nur. Below are included a small part of only one or two of the many proofs of the Divine necessary existence; part of the Eighth Note of the Seventeeth Flash; part of the section from the beginning of the Twenty-Second Word, which demonstrates how all particles prove the necessary existence, oneness, and unity of God; and part of the Eleventh Hope of the Twenty-Sixth Flash:[8]

> "Compare, then, animals like the bee, who receives inspiration, the spider, and the nightingale, who weaves his nest like a stocking, with the mosquito, and you can even compare plants to these animals in just the same way. Yes, the Absolutely Generous One (May His glory be exalted) has given each living being a memorandum written with the pen of pleasure and ink of need, and with it has deposited in the being the programme of the creative commands and index of its duties. See how the All-Wise One of Glory has written on a receipt the amount concerning the bee's duties, from the principles of the Clear Book, and placed it in the coffer in the bee's head. And the key to the coffer is the pleasure particular to the diligent bee. With it, it opens the coffer, reads the programme, understands the command, and acts."
>
> "...If all material causes were to gather together and if they possessed will, they could not gather together the being of a single fly and its systems and organs with their particular balance. And even if they could gather them together, they could not make them remain in the specified measure of the being. And even if they could make them remain thus, they could not make those minute particles, which are constantly being renewed and coming into existence and working, work regularly and in order. In which case, self-evidently, causes cannot claim ownership of things. That is to say, their True Owner is someone else."
>
> "In Short: If the miniature suns and various colours in droplets of water and fragments of glass are not attributed to the sun's reflection and the manifestation of its reflection, it is necessary to accept the existence of innumerable suns in place of the one sun; it necessitates accepting an utterly impossible superstition. In exactly the same way, if everything is not attributed to the Absolutely Powerful One, it necessitates falling to the degree of accepting a hundredfold impossibility like accepting infinite gods instead of the Single God; indeed, gods to the number of particles in existence. To Sum Up: From each particle three windows open up onto the Light of Unity and Necessary Existence of the Pre-Eternal Sun: ..."

8. *Lem'alar*, 126, 241 / *The Flashes Collection* [Eng. trans.], Sözler Publications 1995, 173, 308; *Sözler*, 297 / *The Words*, 304.

Second Mystery: The unity of the Divine Essence, and God's being single and unique

Rational and scholarly evidences for Divine unity are found in the former books of *kalām* and the tenets of faith. However, the evidences and proofs in the Risale-i Nur are both more numerous, and more direct, and different. There is another very important point besides this: the question is not solved by proving the Divine unity (*vahdet*) alone; the truth of the affirmation of Divine unity (*tevhid*), His single Essence administering, directing, and planning all things without partner, helper, or deputy have also to be proved, in addition to His oneness (*ehadiyet*) and unity (*vahdaniyet, vahidiyet*). The matter therefore contains several significant and subtle truths.

The First: The Divine Essence being One and Single.

The Second: The universe in its entirety, with its inner and outer faces, being His property and everything being able to act only through His will and command.

The Third: Despite the singleness and oneness of the Divine Essence, His having disposal over all things without assistant or partner. We shall prove truths like these and analyze them.

1. Proof that the Divine Essence is One and Single

Firstly I shall give one or two brief examples of the extensive manner in which these are proved in the books of *kalām* and the tenets of faith, then shall

offer some examples of how they are proved in the Risale-i Nur. For example, in an esteemed work of the famous Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi, is the following summary of the proofs of the scholars of *kalām*:

> "The world and all that is in it are bound by time. There is nothing that can be outside time. It therefore cannot be supposed that the world should be outside time. What is meant by time is the period of continuance of all bodies, whether in motion or at rest. Since everything is restricted by time, which consists of a particular period, time is a counted number. Also, everything has a beginning, and is dependent on it, in which case everything was created. Being created necessitates one who creates. Thus, the world in its entirety is created, and this necessitates there being a Creator Who does not decline or die.
>
> "Furthermore, God Almighty is One and undying. Yes, for the world suffers decline and death and is created, and this necessitates that it has a single, undying Creator. For if there were more than one creator, they would be subject to what is called number, and everything that is numbered has to have an end (as was mentioned above). All finite things are necessarily created. And everything of which there are two has to something other than itself. According to this, one of the two would necessarily be composed of the essence and would possess attributes distinguishing it from the other. And if it is compound, it has to be a creature that has been planned. It is therefore impossible for these creatures to be God. They are therefore necessarily dependent on the necessary existence of a being who is One."[9]

In other books on the tenets of belief and the large works of *kalām*, some aspects of this matter are expounded more extensively. But as is seen from the above example, they address not everyone, but informed scholars, and are mostly in the form of defences and consist of proofs taken from 'outside' the discipline to answer doubts raised in those times. Now to come to the Risale-i Nur:

Yes, truly the Risale-i Nur has put forward wondrous proofs of Divine unity and oneness that afford complete certainty in this pillar of belief, and leave no room for any doubt or even hesitation. This is not with 'external' proofs; ninety-nine per cent of its proofs of this Islamic matter pertaining to belief are taken from the Qur'an. It does this in a language and style that everyone may understand easily and with hundreds of the clearest of proofs. Thus, all those parts of the Risale-i Nur which deal with belief prove both the Divine necessary existence, and God's unity and oneness. However, some of its treatises focus particularly on the affirmation of Divine unity, and Divine oneness and singleness. Below are passages dealing with this matter in particular:

The Words: The First Ray of the Sixteen Word; the whole of the Twenty-Second Word, and especially the Fourth Flash of the Second Station; the First and Second Stopping-Places of the Thirty-Second Word; and the Thirtieth Window of the Thirty-Third Word, and the Second Point of the Thirty-First Window.

Letters: The end part of the section 'He has no partner' in the Second Station of the Twentieth Letter, and the part of the section 'And He is powerful over all

9. Ibn Hazm, *al-Muḥalla bi'l-Āthār*, i, 23.

things' about "the assistance of unity, the facility of unity, and the manifestation of oneness;" and the part of the same section on the facility resulting from unity; and the Fourth Matter of the Fourth Topic of the Twenty-Sixth Letter.

The Flashes Collection: The beginning and end of the Ninth Flash; the Matters of the Thirteenth Note of the Seventeenth Flash; the Eleventh Hope of the Twenty-Sixth Flash; and the whole of the Thirtieth Flash, particularly the section of the Divine Name of Single.

The Rays: The whole of the Second Ray, and particularly its Second and Third Stations; the proofs of God's necessary existence and unity in the Third Ray, the Treatise on Supplication; the whole of the Seventh Ray, The Supreme Sign, particularly the Second Station; and the First Station of the Fifteenth Ray.

al-Mathnawi al-'Arabi al-Nuri: The part entitled *Lem'alar* at the beginning of the work, which comprises evidences for God's necessary existence and unity; page 140 of *Katre Risalesi*; page 403, the *i'lem* and *Habab Risalesi*; and many places mentioning Divine oneness and unity.

As examples, we give the following

First: Part of the Fourth Matter of the Twenty-Sixth Letter.

> "Each object, especially if it is animate, is a miniature specimen of the universe, a seed of the world, and a fruit of the globe of the earth. Since this is so, the one who created the miniature specimen, seed and fruit must also be the one who created the whole universe. For the creator of the fruit cannot be other than the creator of the tree that bears it."

Second: Part of 'The Third Point Necessitating Divine Unity' from the Second Station of the Second Ray.

> "Since, together with the extraordinary art in the creation of things, especially in living beings, a seed is a small sample of the fruit, a fruit is a miniature specimen of the tree, a tree is a summary index of the species, and the species is a concise map of the universe which has the meaning of a seed, and each of these is a comprehensive point and a droplet gathered together and distilled from the universe according to the principles of knowledge and balances of wisdom; the one who created any one of them must be the one who created the whole universe. Yes, the one who creates the seed of a melon is self-evidently he who created the melon; it is impossible and precluded that it should be anyone other than he."[10]

Third: Part of the Twenty-Ninth Window from the Thirty-Third Word.

> "... Like a seal, everything ascribes all things to its own Creator. It proves each is the letter of its own Scribe. Thus, everything forms a window onto Divine Unity that is such that each thing gives all things to a Single One of Unity. That is to say, there is an impress so wonderful, an art so miraculous in each thing, and especially in each living being, that the one who makes it and inscribes it so meaningfully can make all things, and the one who makes all things is certainly Him. That is to say, one who cannot make all things cannot create a single thing."[11]

10. *Şualar*, 26.
11. *Sözler*, 682 / *The Words*, 714.

Third Mystery: **The universe in its entirety, with both its outer and inner faces, being the dominion of the Single One of Unity, and all things being able to act only through His will and at His command**

If we say that the evidences and proofs of this question in the old works of *kalām* and the tenets of belief are not striking (that is, they are not comprehensible and satisfying for the people of this age), we would not be wrong. This subject has been dealt with in the works of the great scholars of *kalām* such as the following: *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* of Sayyid Sharif al-Jurjani, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid* of Sa'd al-Din al-Taftazani, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* of Imam al-Maturidi, *Tahāfut al-Falasifa* of Imam Ghazzali, as well as the works of the thinkers and strivers of our times such as *al-Hadarāt al-Islāmiyya,* the series, *Allāh, al-Rasūl,* and *al-Islām* of Sa'id Hawwa, and the works of Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti and Sayyid Qutb.

It is clear that the manner in which matters which are obscure but whose existence is established by the Qur'an, that is, the mysteries of religion, are solved in the Risale-i Nur, is not to be found in above valuable works of Islamic scholars, old or new. It is inappropriate therefore for us to quote the relevant passages from them at the beginning of each matter. For on examining those works it is seen that for the most part they comprise replies to the doubts and objections put forward by philosophers, Mu'tazilites, and even Christians and Jews and members of other heretical sects, and that they also describe the doubts in detail. And in proving God Almighty's unity and oneness, they offer no clear evidences addressing both the reason and heart which demonstrate that everything from the sun to minute particles are God's dominions and totally owned property. This means that the obscure aspects of such matters continue to be obscure. Those who wish to see examples may refer to *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* of Imam al-Maturidi pp. 118-135; *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* of Sayyid Sharif al-Jurjani pp.32-72; *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid* of Sa'd al-Din al-Taftazani vol. ii, pp. 98-105; and *al-Iktiṣād fi'l-I'tiqād* of Imam al-Ghazzali p. 49.

To pass on to the method this matter is proved and explained in the Risale-i Nur: all the parts of the Risale-i Nur mentioned in the preceding Mystery, which prove the Divine unity and oneness, also prove the present question brilliantly. It also forms the main subject of other parts, in particular the Treatise On Nature, which is the Twenty-Third Flash, and its Third Impossibility; the Fourteenth Note of the Seventeenth Flash; the whole of the Thirtieth Flash, and particularly the parts of the sections on the Divine Names of Self-Subsistent and Single; the Twentieth Letter and especially the Fourth Phrase, 'His is the dominion;' and numerous other treatises which prove as brilliantly as daylight the Divine unity and oneness, our matter here. We offer as examples:

First: Part of the section 'His is the dominion' from the Second Station of the Twentieth Letter.

> "Is it therefore at all possible that anything apart from the Glorious Lord of All Dominion, Who makes everything, from the vast world of minute particles to a fly, as a field and cultivated property, and makes insignificant man a spectator, an inspector, a tiller, a merchant, a herald, a worshipper, and a slave in that vast property and takes him as an honoured guest and beloved addressee of Himself—could anything apart from Him have free disposal over the property and be lord over the totally owned slave?"[12]

Second: Part of the Fourth Point of the Thirtieth Flash, on the Divine Name of Single.

> "The manifestation of Divine Singleness has placed a seal of unity on the face of the universe whereby it has made it an indivisible whole. One who does not have power of disposal over the whole universe cannot be the true owner of any part of it. The seal is this: like the finest machinery in a factory, the beings and realms of beings in the universe assist one another, and work to complete each other's functions. ..."[13]

As well as parts of the First Point of the Fourth Indication of the same treatise:

> "Yes, both unity and singleness come about through everything being connected with the One of Unity, and through reliance on Him. And this reliance and connection may become a boundless power and strength for the thing. Through the strength of the reliance and connection, that small thing may perform works far exceeding its individual strength, and produce results."

Fourth Mystery: **The Glorious Lord of All Dominion being single and unique, and together with His unity and oneness, holding all the things in existence in His hand and administering and directing them without assistant or partner**

Although the matters of this 'mystery' are of the very greatest importance in increasing the degrees of certainty of belief, I will not be in error if I say I have been able to find no reasoned arguments or proofs of them in the books of *kalām*. For they have not dealt with it. However, it is especially essential at the present time that this matter is proved rationally and in scholarly fashion. It is imperative if one is to attain absolute certainty of belief. We have therefore to ask from the Risale-i Nur directly about this great mystery and obscure riddle. It is true that many verses of the Wise Qur'an proclaim this truth, but it has also to be proved rationally and reasonably. This is what the Risale-i Nur does. That is, its esteemed author, Bediuzzaman. A few examples are as follows.

The First: The First Ray of the Sixteenth Word:

> "O my ignorant soul! You say, 'The oneness of the Divine Essence together with the universality of the Divine acts, the unity of Almighty God's person together with His unassisted comprehensive dominicality, His singleness together with His unshared all-embracing disposal, His being beyond space and yet present everywhere, His infinite exaltedness together with being close to all things, and His being One and yet Himself holding all matters in His hand, are among the truths of the Qur'an. Yet the Qur'an is All-Wise, and that which is Wise does not impose on the reason things which are unreasonable. And the reason sees an apparent contradiction between these things. I would like an explanation of them which will impel

12. *Mektûbat*, 233 / *Letters*, 277.
13. *Lem'alar*, 318, 321 / *The Flashes Collection*, 413, 416.

the reason to submit .... Since comparison is a most brilliant mirror to the Qur'an's miraculousness, we too shall look at this mystery by means of a comparison. ..."

After proving with the three sorts of comparison and representation the question of the simultaneous disposal of reflections and images in mirrors, he says:

"And so, what thing may hide itself from address of oneness which is within the manifestation of the attributes and acts of the Most Pure and Holy One through His universal will, absolute power, and all-encompassing knowledge? The Most Holy One, Who is far beyond and exalted above matter; free and exempt from any restriction or limitation and the darkness of density; of the sacred lights of Whose Names all these lights and luminous beings are but dense shadows; and of Whose beauty all existence and all life and the World of Spirits and the World of Similitudes are semi-transparent mirrors; Whose attributes are all-encompassing and Whose qualities, universal? What matter could be difficult for Him? What thing can be concealed from Him? What individual can be distant from Him? What person can draw close to Him without acquiring universality?"[14]

The Second: Part of the Second Aim from the Second Stopping-Place of the Thirty-Second Word.[15] [Not included here]

In its continuation, in the Second Comparison, he moves on from a tree to the tree of creation, and explaining the mystery of Divine oneness, solves the matter in question. Similarly, the final part of the Second Aim, even as far as the Fifth Indication of the Third Aim solve this truth in a most original way. Other parts of the Risale-i Nur which explain it are as follows: the Second Question in the Conclusion of the Twenty-Third Flash; the First and Second Rays of the Sixth Point of the Thirtieth Flash; and many other parts. I curtail this here since in this paper I am compelled to show only the tips of treatises like the above as examples.

Fifth Mystery: The meaning of Divine unity, oneness, and eternally besoughtedness (*Samediyyet*)

Part of the extensive and profound concepts associated with these sacred terms are found in the books of Qur'anic commentary, *kalām*, and sufism. However, some aspects of them have remained obscure and have needed to be expounded, among which is their being independent relative to meaning and context. We see the following in some of the traditional sources:

1. *Tafsīr* of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, vol. xxxii, p. 181, which gives the meaning of Samad as a person of rank who is sought by others to meet their needs.

2. *Ta'rīfāt* of Sayyid Sharif al-Jurjani, p. 7, which states that One (*Aḥad*) is a Name pertaining to the Divine Essence (*Ism al-Dhāt*), together with the plurality of the other Names and attributes and unseen realms.

3. *Mu'jam Muṣṭalaḥāt al-Ṣūfiyya* of Dr. 'Abd al-Mun'im al-Khafani, p. 10:

"Divine oneness is through an essential power, and is something that is not manifested in either the Names, or the attributes, or in anything affected by them. Thus, Divine oneness is a name for the disposal of the Essence, which is pure truth and

14. *Sözler*, 193, 195 / *The Words*, 209, 211.
15. *Sözler*, 610 / *The Words*, 638.

creativity, and there is no more perfect place for the manifestation of Divine oneness in the universe than this."

4. *Sharḥ al-Ḥikam al-'Aṭā'iyya* p. 109.

"The universe is constant through Almighty God making it so, but through the oneness of His Essence it is annihilated and nothing. For Divine oneness is a wave without ripple or billow... Also, the attribute of oneness is the first 'appearance' of the Essence, so it is impossible for creatures to be qualified by it... "

5. The *Dīwān* of Molla Ahmad al-Jazari, vol. i, p. 217. A verse the meaning of which is "There is a difference between *Wāḥid* and *Aḥad* (both mean 'One'). But in the station of Eternally Besoughtedness, it is *Wāḥid*, while *Aḥad* is one in both." In the Arabic commentary on this, is says: "Oneness (*Aḥadiyya*) shows that there is nothing similar to the Essence and no partners to It, while unity *Wāḥidiyya* shows that He has no like or partner in His attributes."

In Short: These two sacred terms were not discussed to any degree in the books of *kalām*. They were however discussed briefly in sufism, as shown above. In Muhyiuddin al-'Arabi's works they are expounded in a different way, from the point of view of illuminations and spiritual unfolding. But as pointed out in the book *Mu'jam Muṣṭalaḥāt al-Ṣūfiyya* Divine oneness does not have a place of manifestation, a mirror, in creatures. However, as shall be seen, in the Risale-i Nur, it is proved that like the other Names and attributes, Divine oneness has clear places of manifestation and reflection in things. Yes, there are frequent mentions of these questions in the Risale-i Nur, and particularly, Divine unity and oneness. Here, we shall suffice with giving one or two examples, as well as giving a list of other places they are mentioned.

The latest edition of *al-Mathnawī al-'Arabī al-Nūrī*, pp. 210-1, 344; the Fourth '*Lem'a*' of the Fourth '*Ders*' of *Nur'un İlk Kapısı*; Abdülkadir Badıllı's Turkish translation of *Mesnevi-yi Nûriye*, p. 22; the whole of the Second Ray; the Sixteenth Word; the Second Stopping-Place of the Thirty-Second Word; the Eighth Topic of the Eleventh Ray, and the Tenth Topic; *Emirdağ Lahikası*, vol. ii, p. 125; *Şualar* p. 248; the Twenty-Third and Thirtieth Windows of the Thirty-Third Word; and in many places of the Risale-i Nur. By way of example, we include the following:

First: Part of the Sixth Section of the Fourth Phrase of the Twentieth Letter.

"Just as the majesty of dominicality, which is manifested in the totally of the universe, proves and demonstrates Divine unity, so dominical bounty, which bestows on the members of animate creatures their regular provisions, proves and demonstrates Divine oneness. As for unity, it is to say that all those creatures belong to One and they look to One and they are the creation of One. Whereas by oneness is meant that most of the Names of the Creator of All Things are manifested in all beings..."[16]

Second: Part of the Second Truth of the Second Chapter of The Supreme Sign:

"... The encompassing of all things by the extensive mercy of the Merciful One of Beauty, like a light, demonstrates the unity of that Merciful One and that He in no

16. *Mektûbat*, 235 / *Letters*, 278.

way has any partner. Similarly, the fact that under the veil of that all-embracing mercy the lights of most of the Merciful One's Names and a sort of manifestation of His essence are found in everything, and especially in all living beings, and in man in particular, and the fact that this gives each individual a comprehensiveness arising from life which causes him to look to and be related to the whole universe, proves the oneness of the Merciful One and that He is present with all things and does all things in all things."[17]

There are many other places in the Risale-i Nur where the manifestations of Divine unity and oneness are proved, but I reckon the two examples given are sufficient. I now want to give one or two examples of Divine Eternally Besoughtedness (*Samediyet*):

"As the term of the Eternally Besought One 'the Most Beautiful Names' shows, all the Names of the Beauteous One of Glory are beautiful. Among beings the subtlest, most beautiful, and most comprehensive mirror of Eternal Besoughtedness is life."[18]

"... Thus due to this comprehensive nature of life, it is a mirror of eternal besoughtedness reflecting the Sustainer's essential attributes."[19]

The manifestation of Eternal Besoughtedness is mentioned also in the Ottoman edition of *Şualar*, 664; *Lem'alar*, 338 / The Flashes Collection, 437; *Hutbe-i Şamiye*, 133 / The Damascus Sermon, 115-6.

Sixth Mystery: Almighty God being infinitely close to man, though man and creatures are infinitely distant from Him

Both sides of this very abstruse and difficult question are mentioned in Qur'anic verses and Hadiths, and it is explicit and certain. Of course, believers believe in the pronouncements of the Qur'an and Hadiths, so both sides of it are Islamic and Qur'anic truths. The aspect of the matter that may be described as 'a mystery' is the proof of it with rational and scholarly evidences, and the fact that there are no proofs of it in the works of *kalām* and in the Qur'anic commentaries, and this is how it has come down to the present.

It is a fact that I have not been able to find any clear proofs of this obscure question in any of the old books of *kalām* and the tenets of belief. If anyone does find any, of course they should point them out. However, the Risale-i Nur discusses it in many places and has solved it completely. Bediuzzaman indicates in the Twenty-Eighth Letter for the purpose of mentioning a Divine bounty that this extraordinary matter is solved only in the Risale-i Nur.

Some of the places it is solved are these: the Third Ray of the Sixteenth Word; the fourth part of the Fourteenth Word; the First Principle of the Thirty-First Word, about the Ascension; the First Station of the Fifteenth Letter; the treatise *Şemme* in *Mathnawī al-'Arabī*, p. 324; and the treatise *Nūr Min Anwār al-Qur'ān* in the same work, p. 456; and in many other places.

17. *Şualar*, 169 / *The Supreme Sign* [Seventh Ray, Eng. trans: Hamid Algar], Sözler Publications (2nd. edn.) 1993, 136.
18. *Lem'alar*, 216 / *The Flashes Collection*, 280.
19. *Sözler*, 676 / *The Words*, 707.

Now I offer a few passages which look to this matter in particular, and refer the appreciation of them to those who recognize their worth.

First: Part of the Third Ray of the Sixteenth Word.

"... Although the All-Glorious One, the Lord of the command of, *'Be!', and it is*, for Whom the suns and stars are like His soldiers under orders, is closer to all things than they themselves, all things are infinitely distant from Him. If you want to enter the presence of His grandeur without veil, you have to pass through seventy thousand veils of darkness and light, that is, material and physical veils and the veils of the Divine Names and attributes, rise through the thousands of particular and universal degrees of manifestation of each Name, pass on through the most elevated levels of His attributes, and ascend as far as the Sublime Throne, which manifests His Greatest Name, and if you are not the object of favour and attraction, work and journey spiritually for thousands of years."[20]

Second: Part of the First Principle of the Thirty-First Word.

"A king has two sorts of interviewing, conversation, and discussion at his disposal, and two modes of address and favour. The first is to converse with a common subject about a particular matter and special need by means of a private telephone. The second, under the title of august sovereignty, in the name of supreme kingship, with the dignity of universal rule, and with the aim of publishing and promulgating his commands, is to converse and speak through an envoy connected to those matters or by means of a high official related to those commands. It is also to speak through an illustrious edict that proclaims his majesty.

"Thus.. like this comparison, the Creator of the universe, the Lord of all things with their apparent and inner faces, the Sovereign of Pre-Eternity and Post-Eternity, has two modes of conversing, speaking, and favouring. The first is particular and private, the other universal and general..."[21]

Third: *Nūr Min Anwār al-Qur'ān* in *Mathnawī al-'Arabī al-Nūrī*.[22] [Not included here.]

Those who wish may refer to further explanations in the same place.

Seventh Mystery: A minute particle and the sun being the same before Divine power, and huge bodies and universes like the sun and the Divine Throne being created with the same ease, speed, and abundance as microscopic organisms; and no matter being an obstacle to any other; and the proof through rational evidences of Qur'anic verses expressing this meaning

Since the above is established by numerous of the Qur'an's verses, I wanted to see how the verses were explained and proved in the old books of *kalām* and Qur'anic commentaries. I looked too at the works of eminent scholars of the present day. In the following, Almighty God's attribute of 'power,' one of His seven essential attributes, is defined and proved: *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid* of Sa'd al-Din al-Taftazani vol. ii, pp. 347-374; *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* of Sayyid Sharif al-

20. *Sözler*, 198 / *The Words*, 215.
21. *Sözler*, 561 / *The Words*, 585-6.
22. *Mesnevi-i Nûriye* (Trans. Badıllı), 580.

Jurjani vol. iii, pp. 41-66; and *al-Iktiṣād fi'l-I'tiqād* of Imam al-Ghazzali p. 53-64. But in these the subject is expounded according to the accepted method of scholars of *kalām*, which is to refute a whole string of doubts and objections after having first relating them. Moreover, since the way they followed was long and steep, it was difficult to reach the conclusion. Also, the profound truth which is part of our matter, that of everything from minute particles to the sun, and from flies to the heavens, being created directly by His power, is not to be found in the above works.

The Risale-i Nur's method, however, is to prove in certain manner the essence of the matter and the beliefs of the Sunnis, relying directly on the Qur'an, without looking 'outside' or mentioning the doubts and objections.

Now, first I shall quote one or two passages as examples of the works of the great scholars of *kalām*, then shall mention a number of proofs from the Risale-i Nur. The following are pieces taken from *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* of Sayyid Sharif al-Jurjani:

At the beginning of his discussion of this subject is lengthy analysis of the philosophers' calling Almighty God 'self-necessitating,' that is, the idea springing from disbelief that acts proceed from Almighty God outside His will. Following this it says:

> "Almighty God's power is essentially infinite. For His attributes are pre-eternal, and He is One, and He is infinite in respect of His Essence. (That is, in the meaning of negating finiteness.) His power also encompasses all contingent beings, and the relation of His Essence with contingent beings is the same. For if the relation of His power with some of them is proved, its relations with all them is proved. This is the view of the people of truth. It is well-known that the first of the groups that oppose this principle, that is, the relation of Divine power with all creatures being the same, is the group of philosophers called the *al-ḥukamā' al-ilāhiyūn,* who say: 'God is truly One. In which case, from one only one thing can proceed.'"

The second group consisted of the astronomers called the *Ṣābiyyūn.* "They ascribed the motions and revolutions in the world to the situations of the stars. However, both rational proofs and those of the Qur'an and Sunna unanimously attest that nothing in existence other than God has an effect." It supplies replies to false ideas besides these, and then answers the false beliefs of the Magians concerning the gods of good and evil.

We ask the Risale-i Nur about the same questions, and see that many parts of it prove them as clearly as sunlight, also dealing with the Qur'an's reality, which is the essence of the question here. In particular, the Second Ray of the Sixteeth Word, and the section "And He is powerful over all things," which is the Tenth Phrase of the Second Station of the Twentieth Letter; and the Fourth Truth, "Sovereignty," of the Second Station of the Seventh Ray, called The Supreme Sign; and the section discussing the attribute of "Power" in the Second Station of the Fifteenth Ray, called The Shining Proof. Referring detailed proof and explanation to the Risale-i Nur, here we include three of the above passages by way of example.

The First Piece: Part of the Tenth Phrase of the Second Station of the Twentieth Letter.

> "In relation to Divine power the greatest thing is as easy as the smallest. The creation of a species with all of its individuals is as easy and trouble-free as the creation of one individual. It is as easy to create Paradise as the spring and it is as easy to create the spring as a flower. ... A decisive and self-evident proof that everything is equal in relation to Divine power is this: we see with our own eyes in the creation of animals and plants the highest degree of mastery and exquisiteness of art within an infinite multiplicity and liberality; and the greatest distinction and differentiation within the utmost confusion and intermingling; and the highest worth as regards art and the most supreme beauty as regards creation within the greatest abundance and profusion."[23]

Later in the same section, it proves how through "the facility of unity," the creation of a single thing is as easy for that power as all things; and alludes to many other vast mysteries through the mystery of "the manifestation of oneness;" and through the really wonderful proofs of the three mysteries of "the necessity and total detachment and disengagedness of the Maker," "the complete otherness of His Essence and His unrestrictedness," and "His not being bound by space and His indivisibility," demonstrates that for the power of the All-Powerful One the creation of a minute particle and the sun are the same.

Second Piece: Part of the Fourth Truth, "Sovereignty," of the Second Station of the Seventh Ray, The Supreme Sign.

> "...The prevailing creative commands, imperious orders, and kingly laws enunciated in those numerous armies, that extend from the hosts of the atom, the battalions of the vegetable kingdom, the brigades of the animal kingdom, to the armies of the stars, and embrace both the lowliest soldier and the loftiest commander — they all indicate self-evidently the existence of an absolute sovereignty and a universal authority. There is then a truth of absolute sovereignty, and there can be no truth of assigning partners to God. For ... if numerous hands all engage assertively in the same task, the result will be confusion. If there are two kings in one country, or even two headmen in one district, order will disappear, and administration be replaced by anarchy. But on the contrary we see everywhere such order, from the wing of the fly to the lamps of the heavens, from the cells of the body to the signs of the planets, that there is no possibility for the intervention of any partner in God's affairs."[24]

Third Piece: Part of the Second Station of the Fifteenth Ray, The Shining Proof.[25] [Not included here]

In the continuation of this, this vast and incomprehensible truth is investigated and proved in "Nine Steps" on eleven pages. It may be referred to.

23. *Mektûbat*, 245 / *Letters*, 291-2.
24. *Şualar*, 152 / *The Supreme Sign*, 104-5.
25. *Şualar*, 657.

Eighth Mystery: The 'positive' and 'negating' Divine attributes

This question is discussed in detail in the books of *kalām* and the tenets of belief, there being little difference of view. What they say is this: there are thirteen or fourteen Divine attributes it is obligatory to believe in, and each of these are proved to an extent in the books of *kalām*. The subject is set out concisely in works like *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* of Imam Maturidi, *al-Iktiṣād fi'l-I'tiqād* of Imam al-Ghazzali, *Sharḥ Jawhar al-Tawḥīd* of Imam Bajuri, Kastali's gloss on *'Aqā'id al-Nasafī*, and *al-Ḥusn al-Ḥamīdiyya* of Husayn al-Jisri. Having mentioned these, I shall attempt to explain what the 'mystery' aspect of this subject is in the Risale-i Nur and how it came to have its present form.

We may first take two sentences from the definition of the 'positive' attributes in Sayyid Sharif al-Jurjani's work *Ta'rīfāt*: "The essential (*dhātīya*) attributes; they are attributes that can only qualify God, and the opposite of which is completely impossible. For example, power, glory, grandeur, and so on..."[26]

I now want to illustrate with one or two examples how it is defined in the books of *'aqā'id* mentioned above. For instance, in *'Aqā'id al-Nasafī*: Almighty God has pre-eternal attributes subsistent through His Essence. These attributes are neither identical to Him nor are they other than Him. They are: knowledge, power, life, strength, hearing, sight, will, choice, action, creativity, providing, and speech.

In *Sharḥ Jawhar al-Tawḥīd*, in total fourteen attributes which are 'positive' and 'negating' are listed. Seven of these are 'essential,' and the rest are 'positive' and 'negating.'[27]

In Imam A'zam's *Fiqh al-Akbar*, these attributes are said to be fourteen, seven of which are essential *(dhātiyya)* and seven pertain to action (*fi'ilī*).[28]

In Husayn al-Jisri's *al-Ḥusn al-Ḥamīdiyya*, these attributes are said to total thirteen.

Thus, these attributes are stated to number twelve, thirteen, or fourteen. Together with 'existence' (*vujūd*) and 'giving of existence' (*takwīn*), they are fourteen.

From page 53 to 101 of his work *al-Iktiṣād fi'l-I'tiqād*, Imam Ghazzali proves these attributes rationally and in scholarly fashion. It may be referred to. I do not consider it appropriate here to take passages from the above-mentioned works and Ghazzali's work, and make comparisons with the proofs of the Risale-i Nur. For Bediuzzaman called Ghazzali his "master," and in his time Ghazzali achieved an unsurpassed renewal of the religion of Islam from the point of view of scholarship, proofs, and *kalām*; but his scholarly achievements and proofs looked to that age. Discussion of the matter may therefore be referred to a number of passages that Bediuzzaman wrote about the above-mentioned attributes, and particularly about the seven essential (*dhātiyya*) attributes.

26. al-Jurjānī, Sayyid Sharīf, *Ta'rīfāt*, 89.
27. *Ta'rīfāt*, 85.
28. *Ta'rīfāt* (*Sharḥ*: Abu'l Muntahā), 5.

This question is proved and expounded in the Risale-i Nur in a few places only when it arises. For example, in some places the attributes of knowledge, power, and will are proved, while in others, the manifestations of attributes like life, hearing, sight, and self-subsistence. For example, in the First Stoppping-Place of the Thirty-Second Word; certain sections of the Second Ray; the whole of The Supreme Sign, and especially its Second Chapter; the Second Station of The Shining Proof, the Fifteenth Ray; the Second Station of the Twentieth Letter; the treatises of the Thirtieth Flash, and especially those about the Divine Names of Ever-Living, and Self-Subsistent. And so on.

As examples, I want to quote two parts of pieces which expound and prove the seven essential attributes in particular:

The First: Part of the Nineteenth Degree of the First Station of The Supreme Sign:

> "From this continuous, wise and imperious activity, the deeds of an All-Powerful and All-Knowing Doer can be discerned, as if from behind a veil. And from behind the veil of these nurturing and administering deeds of dominicality, the Divine Names, manifest in all things, can be immediately perceived. Then behind the veil of the Beautiful Names, manifest with Glory and Beauty, can be deduced the existence and reality of the seven sacred attributes, according to the testimony of all creation, in a life-giving, powerful, knowledgeable, all-hearing, all-seeing, volitional and speech-endowed form, there appears to the eye of faith in the heart —self-evidently, necessarily, and with full certainty— the existence of a Necessary Existent that is described by these attributes, a Single One of Unity known by these Names, a Peerless and Eternal Doer, in a form more evidential and brilliant than the sun."[29]

In the continuation of the discussion, which we cannot include here, by describing the manifestations of the seven attributes in the universe, it demonstrates that they cannot be separated from the Necessarily Existent One and that they are signs of the functions of the Divine Essence. Those who wish may refer to it.

The Second: Part of the Ninth Phrase of the Second Station of the Twentieth Letter:

> "The Maker Who controls and creates with actions which are to be seen in the universe has an all-encompassing knowledge, and such knowledge is His particular, inherent and necessary quality. Its separation from Him is impossible. In the same way that it is not possible for the sun to exist but for its light not to exist, it is also not possible, though thousands of times more so, for the knowledge of the Being Who creates these well-ordered beings to be separated from Him. Like this all-comprehending knowledge is necessary to that Being, so is it also necessary to all things from the point of view of their being connected to Him. That is to say, it is not possible for anything to be hidden from Him. Just as it is not possible for objects on the face of the earth to face the sun with no barrier and not see it, so is it a thousand times less possible, it is impossible, for things to be hidden in the face of the light of the All-Knowing One of Glory's knowledge. This is because they are in his presence. That is, everything is within the range of His sight, is facing Him, is within the compass of His witnessing; He penetrates into all things."[30]

29. *Şualar*, 145 / *The Supreme Sign*, 92.
30. *Mektûbat*, 242 / *Letters*, 287.

This contains brilliant proofs of the first of the attributes, knowledge and will. Anyone who wishes may refer to it.

There are further explanations in other places, and especially the Second Station of The Shining Proof, and its sections following the discussion of *al-tahiyyat*. Referring readers to that, I cut short this here.

Ninth Mystery: The six 'pillars' of belief necessitating and proving each other

A mystery (*ṭılsım*) not found in other works, which is solved in the Risale-i Nur, is each of the six pillars of belief necessitating the existence of the others in accordance with the rule called *talāzum*, and none of them being able to exist without the others, or without being deficient, and Muslims having to believe in all of them without exception, and if they do not believe in any one of them, their ceasing to be Muslims and believers; and the proof of these.

Of the works of the Islamic thinkers, old and new, this matter has been mentioned only briefly in *al-Hadarāt al-Islāmiyya* by Abu A'la al-Mawdudi, and elucidated to a small extent. Included here are a few sentences related to our subject:

> "The relation between belief in God and belief in the prophets. Yes, if there is anything true to be said on this subject, it is this: since no one else was party to the knowledge God's Messenger (PBUH) was party to; and the light, wisdom, and insight which Almighty God gave him were not given to anyone else; beliefs concerning Almighty God other than those which God's Messenger proclaimed and presented to men and invited them to accept should not be authentic and correct. If a person appears and announces a belief about God's Essence and attributes based on his own thought and ideas, or on what philosophers and others said to be clever have put forward, such a belief can never be true or correct... The meaning of this is as follows: the matters pertaining to belief and the truth and authenticity of the pillars of belief are dependent on belief in the prophets. Belief in the Unseen necessitates too that when by means of the prophets we cease to concern ourselves with what has come from other channels and ways, we will have founded our ideas on true, sound knowledge."

Having supported what he asserts with three verses from the revealed Qur'an, Mawdudi continues:

> "In all their clarity, these verses and hundreds like them proclaim that the tie between belief in God and belief in the prophets is such that it can never be severed or broken... "[31]

We may now examine the Risale-i Nur's method of proof and explanation. Firstly, this matter is discussed in several places in the Risale-i Nur and is proved in several ways. Among these are the Second Topic of the Fifth Matter of the Third Point, on the Divine Name of Sapient, of the Thirtieth Flash; the Conclusion of the Second Ray; the pillars of belief in the angels and Divine Determining in the Ninth Ray; several points of the Fifth Point, on the Divine Name

31. Mawdudi, *al-Ḥaḍarat al-Islāmiyya*, 171.

of Ever-Living, of the Thirtieth Flash; the question and answer in the Ninth Topic of the Eleventh Ray, The Fruits of Belief; the end of the section, *Reşhalar*, pp.66-86 in *Mathnawī al-'Arabī*, and the beginning of *Lâsiyyemalar*; and part of the treatise *Habab*, p. 176, from the same work.

And so, a few sections from the above parts of the Risale-i Nur:

First: The Fourth Sign of the Fifth Point, on the Divine Name of Ever-Living, of the Thirtieth Flash.

In this treatise, entering through the door of life and spirit, the manifestation of the Name of Ever-Living, the author demonstrates with rational and scholarly proofs the pillars of belief in the hereafter, the angels, the prophets, Divine Determining, and the rest. I am compelled here to refer those interested to the original and to cut short this here.

In the Second Topic of the Fifth Matter of the Third Point, on the Divine Name of Sapient, of the Thirtieth Flash, he proves that the manifestation of the Divine Names of All-Wise and Sapient necessitates absolutely certainly the messengership of Muhammad (PBUH).

Second: Part of the Ninth Topic of the Eleventh Ray:

> "Belief in God proves with its own proofs both the other pillars and belief in the hereafter, as is shown clearly in the Seventh Topic of the Fruits of Belief. Yes, is it at all possible and can the reason accept that a pre-eternal everlasting sovereignty of dominicality, a post-eternal Divine rule, which administers the boundless universe as though it was a palace, a city, or a country; and makes it revolve in balanced and ordered fashion; and changes it with wisdom; and equips and directs together particles, planets, flies, and stars as though each was a regular army, and continuously drills them within the spheres of command and will in a lofty manoeuvre; and employing them in duties makes them act, and to wander and travel, and to parade worshipfully; —is it at all possible that that eternal, everlasting, enduring rule would not have an eternal seat, a permanent means, and an everlasting place of manifestation; that is, the hereafter? God forbid! That means the sovereignty of Almighty God's dominicality and —as is described in the Seventh Topic— most of His Names and the proofs of His necessary existence, require the hereafter and testify to it. So see and understand what powerful support this pole of belief has, and believe in it as though seeing it!"[32]

Following this, each of the pillars of belief in the prophets, the revealed scriptures, the angels, and Divine Determining are demonstrated with scholarly and rational proofs. Those who wish may look at these and receive their effulgence.

Third: These examples, that is, several places from *Mathnawī al-'Arabī*, the Third Point of the Eighteenth Word, and the beginning of the Nineteenth Word, prove this matter with such clarity that I do not want to increase the length of this paper by quoting them here.

32. *Şualar*, 238.

The Tenets of Belief

Tenth Mystery: **The mystery of the world's creation, that is, why, although He is in need of nothing and is absolutely self-sufficient, the Sustainer of All the Worlds, the Sovereign of the Universe, created the universe and creatures, and particularly, man, jinn, and satans, and opened up this arena of trial and examination...**

A number of important figures like Muhyiddin al-'Arabi supplied some reasonable explanations in their works of this mighty riddle, but it is mostly sufis and those who seek reality through illumation that have been able to benefit from his profound expositions. I do not consider it necessary to quote here any examples from Muhyiddin al-'Arabi, just to mention as a summary of his ideas on this subject, that when expounding the verse *All praise is due to the Sustainer of All the Worlds,* he interpreted the Hadith: "I was a hidden treasure, so I created the universe that they might know Me," as meaning "I created creatures to be mirrors to Me to behold My beauty in them."[33] Those who want to learn more of this, may refer to Muhydiddin's works *al-Futuḥāt al-Makkiyya* and *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam.*

We may consider now the point of view of, and rational explanations introduced by, the Risale-i Nur. Some examples are these: the Tenth Lesson of *Nur'un İlk Kapısı;* part of the treatise *Şemme* in *al-Mathnawī al-'Arabī* the first parts of the Eleventh Word; and the first question in the Conclusion of the Twenty-Third Flash. As examples:

Firstly: The first part of the Eleventh Word.

> "Brother! If you want to understand a little about the talisman of the wisdom of the world and the riddle of man's creation and the mystery of the reality of the prescribed prayers, then consider this short comparison together with my own soul. One time there was a king. As wealth he had numerous treasuries in which were diamonds and emeralds and jewels of every kind. Besides these he had other, hidden and most strange treasuries. By way of attainment he had great skill in strange arts, and encompassing knowledge of innumerable wondrous sciences, and was most erudite in endless branches of abstruse learning. Now, like every possessor of beauty and perfection wants to see and display his own beauty and perfection, that glorious king also wanted to open up an exhibition and set out displays within it in order to make manifest and display in the view of the people the majesty of his rule, his glittering wealth, the wonders of his art, and the marvels of his knowledge. And also so that he could behold his beauty and perfection in two respects..."[34]

Bediuzzaman explains the meaning of the comparison, which is a mirror to the reality of the universe and all its extraordinary creatures, as follows:

> "The palace is this world. Its roof is the heavens illuminated with smiling stars, and its floor, the face of the earth adorned from east to west with multifarious flowers. As for the King, he is the Most Holy One, the Pre-Eternal and Post-Eternal Monarch, Whom all things in the seven heavens and earth glorify and extol, each with its particular tongue. He is a king so omnipotent that He created the heavens and earth in six days, then abided on the Throne; One of Power and Majesty, Who, alternating night and day like two threads, one white and one black, writes His signs of the page of the universe; One to Whose command the sun, moon, and stars are subjugated. The apartments of the palace are the eighteen thousand worlds, each of which has been set in order and decorated in a fashion suitable to it. The strange arts you saw in the palace are the miracles of Divine Power you see in this world, and the foods you saw there are signs to the wonderful fruits of Divine Mercy in this world, especially in summer, and above all in the gardens of Barla. The stove and kitchen there is the earth here, which has fire in its heart, and the face of the earth. While the jewels of the hidden treasuries you saw in the comparison are the similitudes of the manifestations of the Sacred Divine Names. The embroideries there, and the signs of the embroideries, are the well-ordered and finely worked beings and the harmonious impresses of the pen of Power which adorn this world and point to the Names of the All-Powerful One of Glory. As for the Master, he is our Master Muhammad (upon whom be blessings and peace). His assistants are the prophets (upon whom be peace), and his students, the saints and purified scholars. The ruler's servants in the palace indicate the angels (upon whom be peace) in this world. And the guests invited to the banquet and to spectate in the comparison are the jinn and mankind in this guest-house of the world, and the animals, who are the servants of mankind. As for the two groups, one of them here is the people of belief, who are the students of the All-Wise Qur'an, the interpreter of the verses and signs of the book of the universe. The other group are the people of unbelief and rebellion, who follow Satan and the evil-commanding soul; deaf and dumb, like animals, or even lower, they form the group of the misguided, who recognize the life of this world only."[35]

He then explains in six pages the purpose, wisdom, and aims of men and jinn coming to this realm of examination, and their duties. I refer readers to the original rather than extending the discussion here.

Secondly: The question and answer at the end of the Conclusion of the Twenty-Third Flash.

> "We hear many lazy people and those who neglect the five daily prayers ask: 'What need has God Almighty of our worship that in the Qur'an He severely and insistently reproves those who give up worship and threatens them with such a fearsome punishment as Hell? How is it in keeping with the style of the Qur'an, which is moderate, mild and fair, to demonstrate the ultimate severity towards an insignificant, minor fault?'
>
> "The Answer: God Almighty has no need of your worship, nor indeed of anything else. Rather, it is you who needs to worship, for in truth you are sick. As we have proved in many parts of the Risale-i Nur, worship is a sort of remedy for your spiritual wounds. If someone who is ill responds to a compassionate doctor who insists on his taking medicines that are beneficial for his condition by saying: 'What need do you have of it that you are insisting in this way?', you can understand how absurd it would be..."[36]

The Seventh and Eighth Words may also be referred in connection with this.

33. *Ishārāt al-I'jāz* (Ar.), 27 / *İşârâtü'l-İ'caz* (Turk.), 17.
34. *Sözler*, 120 / *The Words*, 133.

35. *Sözler*, 123 / *The Words*, 135-6.
36. *Lem'alar*, 190 / *The Flashes Collection*, 248.

Eleventh Mystery: **It is apparently ugly that with the revelation of scriptures and sending of prophets, and the evil ones being set to pester people, the majority of people fail the examination in this arena of trial and testing and due to their embracing unbelief, sin, and rebellion, are sent to Hell. Where is the Divine mercy in such examination and accountability, when for the majority the results are detrimental?**

I reckon there is not much to be found in the books of *kalām* and doctrine written by the Islamic scholars which solves this awesome question. I myself could find nothing in my limited searches. Perhaps in their times, no need was felt to ask such a question. Nevertheless, if anyone knows of such discussions, they may make a comparison.

The Risale-i Nur, however, has supplied thorough answers to this question, and has truly succeeded in solving this awesome riddle. The following are some of the pieces where they are to be found: parts of the Twelfth Word; the question and answer in the Second Sign of the Third Station of the Second Ray; the discussion on page 207 of the Arabic edition of *Ishārāt al-I'jāz*; the Second Sign of the Thirteenth Flash; and so on. Of these, one or two are now given as examples:

Firstly: From the Twelfth Letter.

> "Why are devils created? Almighty God created Satan and evils; what is the wisdom in it? Isn't the creation of evil, evil, and the creation of bad, bad?
>
> "The Answer: God forbid, the creation of evil is not evil, the 'acquisition' of or desire for evil is evil. For creation and bringing into existence look to all the consequences, whereas such desire looks to a particular result, since it is a particular relation. For example, there are thousands of consequences of rain falling, and all of them are good. If through mischoice, some people receive harm from the rain, they cannot say that the creation of rain is not mercy, they cannot state that the creation of rain is evil. For it is due to their mistaken wishes and inclinations that it is evil for them. Also, there are numerous benefits in the creation of fire, and all of them are good. But if some people receive harm from fire through their misuse of it and their wrong choice, they cannot say that the creation of fire is evil; because it was not only created to burn them. Rather, they thrust their hands into the fire while cooking the food by mistake, and made that servant inimical to themselves. In Short: The lesser evil is acceptable for the greater good. If an evil which will lead to a greater good is abandoned so that a lesser evil should not be, a greater evil will then have been perpetrated."[37]

The remaining two questions and answer in this letter have great importance. The first, "The majority of humanity become unbelievers due to the existence of Satan and embrace unbelief and suffer harm, despite the sending of prophets...? Its answer is sufficient. The other question, "Almighty God sends calamities and inflicts tribulations; is this not tyrannical towards the innocent in particular, and animals even?" The answer truly springs from belief and the Qur'an, with a brilliance and luminosity, satisfying both the reason and the heart. It may be referred to.

37. *Mektûbat*, 43 / *Letters*, 62.

Second Piece: Part of the question and answers in the Second Sign of the Third Station of the Second Ray:

> "You are saying in this Station that beauty, good, and justice encompass the universe, so what do say to all the ugliness, disasters, illness, tribulations, and death that we see before us?
>
> "**The Answer:** A single instance of ugliness which results in or shows up numerous instances of beauty is indirectly an instance of beauty. While the non-existence of an ugliness, or its being invisible, which then conceals numerous instances of beauty and does not permit them to be seen, is not a single, but a manifold, ugliness. For example, if an ugliness which is a unit of measurement is non-existent, the beauty would be of only one sort, and its numerous degrees would remain concealed. For it is through the intervention of ugliness that the degrees of beauty unfold. Just as the degrees of heat become apparent through the existence of cold, and the degrees of light are known through darkness, so universal instances of good, universal benefits, universal bounties, and universal instances of beauty become apparent through there being minor instances of evil, harm, calamities and ugliness. This means that the creation of ugliness is not ugly, it is beautiful, because the majority of its results are beautiful... As for transience and death, ... they are not contrary to general mercy, all-embracing beauty, and comprehensive good; in fact, they are necessitated by them. The creation of Satan, even, since he is the cause of striving and competition, the springs of man's spiritual progress is also good, as is the creation of his species; their creation is beautiful in that respect. Also, for unbelievers to suffer torments in Hell even is good, since through their unbelief they have transgressed the rights of all beings and insulted their honour."[38]

Following the above question is another, which is of great importance: "We may say that the creation of unbelievers and satans is good since it is the cause of competition and progress... but why does the Absolutely Compassionate One, the Absolutely Self-Sufficient One, inflict evil, calamities, and ugliness on wretched individuals?" The answer too is extremely important and makes one's belief sparkle almost visibly. It may be referred to.

It will be seen that in addition to the pieces mentioned above, in the Fourth Topic of the Twenty-Sixth Word from the point of view of reason and the Islamic viewpoint it is solved completely.

Twelfth Mystery: **(Related to the Eleventh Mystery, and in completion of it) The question: How is it that men deserve infinite torment in an endless Hell as recompense for limited sins and unbelief in a limited lifetime?**

I have researched this awesome question, and have been able to find its answer and solution neither in the old books of *kalām*, nor in the sufi works, nor in the works of the learned thinkers and *mujahids* of this age. However, it is discussed in several places in the Risale-i Nur, and satisfactory and sufficient answers are given. Some of them are as follows: the Eleventh and Twelfth Signs

38. *Şualar*, 30.

of the Thirteenth Flash; part of the Twenty-Eighth Flash; the Arabic edition of *Ishārāt al-I'jāz* pages 86-7; the end of the Eighth Topic of the Eleventh Ray; and so on. There are other places I have not found and written here. Now a number of mysteries connected with the answer of this important question:

First Piece: Part of the Eighth Topic of the Fruits of Belief (Eleventh Ray):

> "There is no contradiction between the existence and ghastly torments of Hell, and infinite mercy, true justice, and wisdom with its balance and absence of waste. Indeed, mercy, justice, and wisdom require its existence. For to punish a tyrant who tramples the rights of a thousand innocents and to kill a savage animal who tears to pieces a hundred timid animals, is for the oppressed a thousandfold mercy within justice. While to pardon the tyrant and leave the savage beast free is for hundreds of wretches a hundredfold pitilessness in place of that single act of misplaced mercy. Similarly, among those who will enter Hell is the absolute disbeliever. For through his disbelief and denial he both aggresses against the rights of the Divine Names, and through denying the testimony of beings to those Names, he transgresses their rights, ... His disbelief is therefore a crime and wrong of such vast proportions it may not be forgiven.."[39]

Second Piece: Various parts of the second part of the Twenty-Eighth Flash:

> "How can incarceration in Hell for an infinite duration in return for unbelief for a short duration be justice?
>
> "The Answer: Reckoning a year to be three hundred and sixty-five days, the law of justice requires for a one-minute murder seven million eight hundred and eighty-four thousand minutes imprisonment. So, since one minute's unbelief is like a thousand murders, according to the law of human justice, someone who lives a life of twenty years in unbelief and dies in that state deserves imprisonment for fifty-seven billion, two hundred and one thousand two hundred million years. ... The reason for the connection between these two numbers, so far from one another, is this: since murder and unbelief are destruction and aggression, they have an effect on others. A murder which takes one minute negates on average at least fifteen years of the victim's life, so the murderer is imprisoned in their place. While since one minute of unbelief denies a thousand and one Divine Names and denigrates their inscriptions, violates the rights of the universe and denies its perfections, and gives the lie to innumerable evidences of Divine Unity and rejects their testimony, the unbeliever is cast down to the lowest of the low for more than a thousand years, and 'dwells' in imprisonment."[40]

There are numerous further explanations of this in the Risale-i Nur. Particularly in the Tenth Word, proving how one minute's disbelief is denial of a thousand and one Divine Names and insulting towards them. Another side of the question is demonstrated in the Second Indication of the Thirteenth Flash; and there are further complementary explanations on page 207 of the Arabic edition of *Ishārāt al-I'jāz*. All these may be referred to.

39. *Şualar*, 230.
40. *Lem'alar*, 276 / *The Flashes Collection*, 374.

Thirteenth Mystery: **The calamities visited on the innocent, and even innocent animals, at the Divine command, apparently ruins them. Is this not unjust?**

This question contains a number of points. As far as I have been able to see, this matter is not expounded in the books of *kalām* and doctrine. I referred to verse 25 of Sura al-Anfal in Fakr al-Din al-Razi's *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, and again there was nothing by way of answer. I looked too at the books of sufism, namely Shaykh 'Abd al-Qahir al-Dabbagh's *al-Ibrīz*, the famous *Risālat al-Qūshayriyya*, 'Abd al-Qadir Gilani's book of guidance *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī*, and 'Ata'ullah Iskandari's *al-Ḥikam al-'Aṭā'iyya*, and could find no detailed reply to the question above. Only in *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* and *al-Ḥikam al-'Aṭā'iyya*, there were explanations of instances of wisdom in the visitation of calamities and tribulations on believers. For example, in *al-Ḥikam al-'Aṭā'iyya* it says:

> "Almighty God, the All-Wise Opener, bestows calamities, illnesses, and tribulations in order to make Himself known. They are means of acquiring knowledge of Him through His attributes. Like through His grace and wrath, etc. The disaster-struck should not be unhappy, for through illness they make large gains with few actions. For the illnesses and calamities visited on you are sent by God to make Himself known. While your worship and good works are things you wish to present to Him. Can there be any comparison between what He has visited on you, and what you want to offer to Him?"[41]

Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir's admonitions and guidance in his work mentioned above are similar to this.

We may now look at how the Risale-i Nur solves the 'obscure' aspects of this question and how it clarifies them: the Second Point of the Eighteenth Word; the Fourth Topic of the Twenty-Sixth Word; the Third Question of the Twelfth Letter; the First Sign of the First Station of the Twenty-Fourth Letter; the Second Point of the Second Flash; the Second Indication of the Thirteenth Flash; the Thirteenth Hope of the Twenty-Sixth Flash; the question and answer in the Second Sign of the Third Station of the Second Ray; *al-Mathnawī al-'Arabī* page163, *Katre Risalesi;* the Introduction to the Seventeenth Word; the First Station of the Fifteeth Ray, called The Shining Proof.

Some of the places given above were cited in the previous Mystery, and may be referred to there. I want to give two or three examples dealing with this matter in particular:

First Example: Part of the Second Point of the Eighteenth Word.

> "...Because man is both enamoured of the apparent and is self-centered, he considers only the externals and pronounces them ugly. Since he is self-centred, he reasons according to the result which looks to himself and judges it to be ugly. Whereas, if, of their aims one looks to man, thousands look to their Maker's Names. For example, man reckons to be harmful and meaningless thorned plants and trees, which are among the great miracles of the Creator's power. Whereas they are the well-equipped heroes of the grasses and trees. And for example, hawks

41. *Sharḥ al-Ḥikam al-'Aṭā'iyya*, 21.

harrying sparrows is apparently incompatible with mercy. But through this harrying, the sparrow's abilities unfold. And for example, he considers the snow to be very cold and uninviting, but under that cold and unpleasing veil there are aims so warm and results so sweet that they defy description."[42]

Second Example: The Fifth Question of the Addendum to the Fourteenth Word.

"Why does the One Who is All-Just and All-Compassionate, All-Powerful and All-Wise, not give particular punishments for particular wrongs, but inflicts a mighty element? How is this in keeping with the beauty of His mercy and His all-encompassing power?

"The Answer: The All-Powerful One of Glory assigns numerous duties to each element and causes them to produce numerous results through each duty. If one result of one of an element's duties is ugly, evil, or calamitous, the other good results make this result good also. If the element, which is angry at man, is prevented from that duty so that the single ugly result will not occur, then instances of good to the number of the good results will be abandoned, and so since not doing a necessary good is evil, instances of evil will be done to the number of the instances of good. A single evil not occurring would be extremely ugly, contrary to wisdom, contrary to reality, and a fault. And power, wisdom and reality are free of fault. Since certain faults are rebellion comprehensive enough to cause the earth and elements to become angry, and are insulting aggression infringing the rights of numerous creatures, for sure, in order to demonstrate the extraordinary ugliness of that crime, the command being given to a mighty element to 'reprimand them' among its other general duties, is perfect wisdom and justice, and for the oppressed, perfect mercy."[43]

This addendum contains other curious questions and their answers. Those who wish may refer to the third and fourth in particular.

Third Example: Part of Abdülkadir Badıllı's Turkish translation of *al-Mathnawī al-'Arabī al-Nūrī*.[44] [Not included here]

Fourteenth Mystery: **What is the purpose of the continual destruction and renewal, death and life, and activity in the universe, and together with these, the aim of the motion of minute particles?**

This awesome riddle and profound mystery was not discussed much in the old Islamic works of *kalām*, doctrine, and philosophy; that is, in the way it is elucidated and proved in the Risale-i Nur. However, in the books of *kalām* it was discussed concisely as follows:

"All beings and bodies may be put into two categories; those included in a place or class, and those that are not. If the former are not united with others, they are called an 'atom,' whereas if they are, they are called 'bodies.'" And so on. Lengthy explanations then ensue. Nevertheless, some *kalām* scholars put forward proofs and arguments refuting the question of the indivisible atom. In short, the matter is lengthy and as explained in those old books extremely difficult to draw conclusions from them at this time. The names of some of those I have been able to look at are Ghazzali's *al-Iktiṣād fi'l-I'tiqād* pages 19-21, Ibn Hazm's *al-Faṣl fi'l-Milal*, vol. v, page 92. And some others.

42. *Sözler*, 232 / *The Words*, 241.
43. *Sözler*, 173 / *The Words*, 187.
44. *Mesnevi-i Nûriye* [Turk. trans. Badıllı], 572.

Now we may consider this subject in the Risale-i Nur: the Eighteenth Letter; Twenty-Fourth Letter; and Thirtieth Word; and many other places. Of these, we give one or two as examples:

First Example: The Introduction of the Second Aim of the Thirtieth Word.

"The transformation of particles are the vibrations and wanderings that occur while the signs of creation are being written in the book of the universe by the pen of power of the Pre-Eternal Inscriber. They are not games of chance and jumbled meaningless motion like the Materialists and Naturalists fancy. Because, like all beings, each particle says 'In the Name of God' at the start of its motion, and it raises loads infinitely exceeding its strength. For example, a seed the size of a grain of wheat shoulders a load the size of a huge pine tree. And on completion of its duty, it says 'All praise be to God.' For by exhibiting an art that is beautiful and full of purpose and a decoration that is fine and full of benefits which astound all minds, it displays a work of art like an ode in praise of the Glorious Maker. Look carefully at pomegranates and ears of corn, for example."[45]

The Second Aim of the Thirtieth Word, about the transformations of minute particles is eleven pages in length. On each page, the purpose and aims of the motion and transformations of particles are proved according to scholarly and rational principles. Those who wish may refer to it.

Second Example: The Third Matter of the Eighteenth Letter.

"What is the reason for and wisdom in the astonishing unceasing activity in the universe? Why do these fleeting beings not stop, but continuously change and are renewed?

"... If a person performs a natural function or social duty and works enthusiastically to do so, one who observes him carefully will certainly understand that there are two things that make him perform the duty: **The First** are the benefits, fruits, and advantages which result from the duty, which are called 'the ultimate cause.' **The Second:** there is a love, a desire, a pleasure, which cause the duty to be performed enthusiastically, and these are called the 'necessitating cause and reason.'

"For example, eating food; the pleasure and longing arising from appetite drive a person to eat, and afterwards, the result of eating is nourishing the body and perpetuating life. In the same way, *And God's is the highest similitude*, based on two sorts of Divine Names, the awesome and astonishing endless activity in the universe is for two vast instances of wisdom, each of which is also infinite..."[46]

In fact, it is the Twenty-Fourth Letter where this difficult and obscure question is solved. With its two Stations and ten Signs and Indications, each of which demonstrates a different meaning, different evidences, and different scholarly truths, the Twenty-Fourth Letter makes the matter completely clear. Even if only a small example, I include here one or two sentences:

"... As necessitated by mercy, wisdom, and lovingness, the Wise, Compassionate,

45. *Sözler*, 548 / *The Words*, 570.
46. *Mektûbat*, 86 / *Letters*, 113-4.

and Loving Creator causes the factory of the universe to work. He makes all transient existences the seeds to numerous perpetual existences; He makes them the means for the fulfilment of the dominical aims; He makes them manifest the Divine functions; He makes them the ink for the pen of Divine Determining and shuttles for the weaving of Divine power; and for many elevated aims and favours which we do not yet know, through the activity of His power, He causes the activity of the universe; He causes particles to spin, beings to travel, animals to flow, and the planets to rotate; He makes the universe speak, causing it to silently recite His verses, His signs, and to inscribe them."[47]

***Fifteenth Mystery:* According to Sunni beliefs, those who commit grievous sins are considered to be sinners, but not unbelievers**

This matter is discussed in the books of doctrine, and has been debated to an extent in the light of the Qur'an and Hadiths. The consensus of the Sunnis is that "Those who commit grievous sins —so long as they do not consider it to be lawful— should not be deemed to be unbelievers; they can only be called sinners." They put forward numerous evidences from the Qur'an and Sunna to support this. Nevertheless, since they did not explain the underlying wisdom in this and the true reason, this ruling of Islamic beliefs has in one respect always remained obscure. For further study of it, readers may refer to 'Ali al-Qari's commentary on Imam A'zam's *Fiqh al-Akbar* pp. 102-3, and Imam Bajuri's *Sharḥ Jawhar al-Tawḥīd*, page 433.

We now turn to the Risale-i Nur to learn the wisdom and 'obscure' (*tılsım*) aspects of the matter, as well as its scholarly and rational side. There are discussions of it in the Fifth and Seventh Indications of the Thirteenth Flash; the Second Flash; The Damascus Sermon page 99; *Habbe Risalesi* in *Mathnawī al-'Arabī*, page 229, and in other places. Now of these, we give one or two as examples:

The First: Part of the Fifth Indication of the Thirteenth Flash.

"Thanks be to God, through its light I understood both that the All-Wise Qur'an's powerful encouragement and assurances are completely in place, and that the people of belief being deceived by Satanic machinations is not due to lack of belief or weakness of belief. I understood too that one who commits grievous sins does not become an unbeliever, and that the Mu'tazilites and some Kharijite sects are in error by stating that 'Someone who commits a grievous sin either becomes an unbeliever or is in a state between belief and unbelief,' and that that unfortunate friend of mine sacrificing a hundred lessons in reality to win the attentions of such a scoundrel was not despicable abasement and degeneration; I thanked Almighty God and was saved from the abyss."[48]

The Second: Part of the Seventh Indication of the Thirteenth Flash.

"'How can someone who commits grievous sins remain a believer?'... Just as man's evil-commanding soul prefers an ounce of immediate, present pleasure to a ton of postponed, hidden pleasure, so too he shrinks at the fear of an immediate slap more than at a year's torment in the future. Furthermore, if the emotions are

47. *Mektûbat*, 296 / *Letters*, 350.
48. *Lem'alar*, 74 / *The Flashes Collection*, 107-8.

dominant in a person, they do not heed the reasoning of the mind. Desires and delusions govern and he prefers the slightest and least significant present pleasure to huge reward in the future. He flinches from some minor present distress more than from some terrible postponed torment. ... In which case, committing grievous sins does not arise from lack of belief, but from the defeat of the heart and mind due to the predomination of emotion, desire, and illusion."[49]

The Third: The other side of this question, that all sins may lead to unbelief, which is explained in the First Point of the Second Flash.

"Sin, penetrating to the heart, will blacken and darken it until it extinguishes the light of belief. Within each sin is a path leading to unbelief. Unless that sin is swiftly obliterated by seeking God's pardon, it will grow from a worm into a snake that gnaws on the heart."[50]

***Sixteenth Mystery:* The rulings concerning accusations of unbelief and associating partners with God**

Together with there being a number of differences between the schools of law, in the books of the Shari'a various matters have been called "unbelief." For instance, the uttering of certain expressions and commiting certain actions. However, although one of the severest warnings God's Messenger (PBUH) gave concerning the error and danger of ascribing unbelief to others, I carried out a small investigation into to whom and when it could be applied. It is well-known that the Mu'tazilites, the Shi'a, and some Kharijites went to excess in this matter and accused Muslims of unbelief and associating partners with God on virtually any pretext. So I looked at what the Sunni scholars had to say about the apparent meanings of Hadiths, which by way of encouraging [what is good] and restraining [from what is bad], state in exaggerated manner that certain acts and sayings are unbelief. They made these rulings without taking into consideration the extremist and mistaken views of the above-mentioned groups, who opposed the majority of Muslims.

This matter is studied at length in an excellent work called *al-Ḥukm wa Qaḍiyya Takfīr al-Muslim* by Salim al-Bahnasawi. After a general discussion, he offers a section called "Unbelief in actions and metaphorical unbelief." To disbelieve in the tenets of belief is denial of some or all of the pillars of belief or their subsidiary matters, and puts a person outside the religion of Islam (God forbid). However, unbelief in actions is not to conform to the major precepts of Islam, like not performing the obligatory prayers and not governing in accordance with the Divine commands, and does not put a person outside the religion.[51]

Accordingly, what is meant by unbelief in actions is grievous sins. Anyway, the unanimous view of the Sunnis is that "Those who commit grievous sins are not unbelievers, but sinners. But if they believe that the sin is licit, then it is a different matter." This has been dealt with thoroughly and solved. Here, the important, but obscure, matter is whether or not unbelief in actions and grievous sins

49. *Lem'alar*, 77 / *The Flashes Collection*, 111.
50. *Lem'alar*, 9 / *The Flashes Collection*, 22.
51. al-Bahnaṣāwī, Salīm, *al-Ḥukm wa Qaḍiya Takfīr al-Muslim*, 69.

are the same thing. Especially in the Hanafi School, they are considered to be different. The Shafi'i's have called "grievous sins" certain words and actions known as unbelief, but have still have noted the existence of certain acts they call "unbelief." And so, what is the true place of "metaphorical unbelief" or the question of actions, which is different to unbelief in respect of belief itself, and when does it occur? Also, in regard to the other side of this question, how should the ecstatic utterances of some important sufi figures be regarded, and the *fatwa's* of some excessively bigotted scholars of the schools of law, which accused them of unbelief. In these questions I referred to the Risale-i Nur, Bediuzzaman's pharmacy, and I may say that, with God's permission, it solves the matter completely. Before imbibing the healing potions of the Risale-i Nur, I want to quote two passages from one of Ibn Hajar al-Haythami al-Makki's rulings (*fatwa*) on the latter question, since he was an eminent *mujtahid*. In summary:

> "Ibn al-'Arabi's extraordinary wonder-working and mental states; his asceticism, worship, fear of God, learning, and complete knowledge of the sciences of religion and truths of the Shari'a, even to the extent of qualifying to practise *ijtihad*, ... and the fact that he continued all these till his death, shows that some of the explicit expressions in his works which do not conform to Islamic beliefs must hold another meaning. For according to the rule, 'what is fundamental to things is constancy or continuation,' that sublime person's asceticism, worship, and perfect fear of God, which continued till his death, were fundamental, so he may not be judged according to certain things he said which need to be interpreted and not comprehensible by everyone... "[52]

Now we pass on to the Risale-i Nur and to Bediuzzaman's early works, and we see that the matter as a whole is founded on three questions:

Firstly: Even if a person deserves to be accused of unbelief, the Shari'a does not command that he should be called "an unbeliever" (*kāfir*).

Secondly: The error of those, being influenced by extremist Sunni scholars, pass judgement in accordance with the apparent meanings of some verses and Hadiths.

Thirdly: The analysis of what certain sufis said while in a state of ecstasy, or as a result of illuminations.

Taking these three matters in order, I shall give examples from the Risale-i Nur, showoing how it discusses them:

First Matter: Part of Bediuzzaman's reply to Salih Yeşiloğlu, who had 'Alawi leanings.[53] [Not included here]

A passage illustrating another side of the question.[54] [Not included here]

A passage from *Sünûhat* solves yet another side of it.[55] [Not included here]

Second Matter: Part of a question and answer from *Münâzarat*.[56] [Not included here]

52. Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī al-Makkī, *al-Fatāwa al-Ḥādithiyya*, 335.
53. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, Ms.
54. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, Ms., 657.
55. *Âsâr-ı Bedi'iye*, 128; (*Sünûhat*, 20).
56. *Âsâr-ı Bedi'iye*, 434.

Third Matter: Part of the Fourth Topic of the Twenty-Sixth Letter.

> "Others of the saints have appeared outside some of the principles of the Sunnis, and on a path opposed to their rules. Thus, those who have considered this group of saints have divided into two groups: One group have denied their sainthood because they are opposed to the principles of the Sunnis. They have even gone as far as declaring some of them to be unbelievers. The other group are those that follow them. Since they accept their sainthood, they say that 'The truth is not restricted to the way of the Sunnis.' They have formed a group of the innovators and have even gone as far as misguidance. They do not know that every person who is rightly guided cannot be a guide. Their shaykhs are to be excused from their mistakes, because they were ecstatics, but their followers cannot be excused. As for the middle group, they do not deny the sainthood of the saints, but do not accept their ways and paths. They say: 'Their words which are opposed to the principles [of religion] were either metaphorical utterances the meaning of which is not known, or they [the saints] were in error, being overcome by their mental state.'"[57]

Another scholarly and investigative analysis is found in *Lemâat*.[58] [Not included here]

Seventeenth Mystery: **It is established by the Qur'an that sustenance is guaranteed by God, but some people and animals die of hunger?**

Yes, this question has to be solved too. For the verse, *How many are the creatures that carry not their own sustenance? It is God Who feeds [both] them and you* (29:6) states explicitly that sustenance is guaranteed by the Munificent Provider, which necessitates that no one should die of hunger. This important and difficult mystery should have been solved in connection with the tenets of belief, yet there is no discussion of it in the books of *kalām* and doctrine. That means no one felt the need to ask such a question. We refer the matter directly to the Risale-i Nur, and there it is discussed and solved in several places. For example, in the Twelfth Flash; the Fourth Point of the Nineteenth Flash; in one of the pieces in the second part of the Twenty-Eighth Flash; and in some places of *al-Mathnawī al-'Arabī*. As an example,

First Piece: Part of the First Point of the Twelfth Flash.

> "The Sustainer's guarantee is a reality; none die of hunger. For that All-Wise One of Glory stores up some of the sustenance He sends to the bodies of living creatures as fat, as reserves. In fact, He stores up a part of the sustenance He sends to each cell, in the cell, like a reserve stock to be spent when no sustenance comes from outside. They die before this store is finished. That is to say, such death is not from lack of sustenance; they rather die from a habit acquired through wrong choice and due to illness arising from desire for the wrong things and the giving up of habit."[59]

Deeming this First Point of the Twelfth Flash to be sufficient, I have not given any other examples here.

57. *Mektûbat*, 342 / *Letters*, 402.
58. *Âsâr-ı Bedi'iye*, 608-11.
59. *Lem'alar*, 63 / *The Flashes Collection*, 95.

Eighteenth Mystery: **Several verses in the Qur'an state explicitly "Pray to Me and I shall answer you," but often prayers are offered which are not responded to. The reason for this**

I looked at a number of old Islamic works on asceticism, sufism, and conduct, and particularly, Imam Ghazzali's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn,* vol. i, pp. 304-9, where the conduct, conditions, and times of prayers are discussed. It goes without saying that in this work the matter is set out in the best way. However, I saw that it offers no explanation that might reply to our question. Thus, the point continues to be obscure. Again I referred the matter directly to the Risale-i Nur, which mentions it in several places. For example, the Fifth Point of the First Chapter of the Twenty-Third Word; the Eighth Lesson of *Nur'un İlk Kapısı*; *Şemme Risalesi* in *Mathnawī al-'Arabī,* page 373; the Third Point in particular of the First Addendum to the Twenty-Fourth Letter; and the Third Matter of the Thirteenth Note of the Seventeenth Flash. Now, three pieces from these:

First Piece: Part of the Fifth Point of the Twenty-Third Word.

> "'We frequently offer supplications, but they are not accepted, and the verse is general; it states that every supplication is answered.'
>
> "The Answer: To answer is one thing, to accept is something quite different. Every supplication is answered, but its being accepted and exactly what was sought being given is dependent on Almighty God's wisdom. ... Thus, since Almighty God is all-present and all-seeing, He responds to the supplications of His servants. Through His presence and response, He transforms the desolation of loneliness and solitude into familiarity. But He does this, not in accordance with man's capricious and importunate demands, but in accordance with the requirements of dominical wisdom; He gives either what is sought or what is better than it, or He gives nothing at all."[60]

Second Piece: Part of the Third Point of the First Addendum to the Twenty-Fourth Letter:

> "There are two ways in which voluntary supplication by word is acceptable. It is either accepted exactly as desired or what is better is granted. For example, someone asks for a son, and Almighty God gives a daughter like Mary. It may not be said: 'His supplication was not accepted,' but that 'It was accepted in a better form.'"

And a couple of sentences from the Fourth and Fifth Points:

> "The best, finest, sweetest, most immediate fruit and result of supplication is this, that the person who offers it knows there is someone who listens to his voice, sends a remedy for his ailment, takes pity on him, and whose hand of power reaches everything. ... Supplication is the spirit of worship and the result of sincere belief. For one who makes supplication shows through it that there is someone who rules the whole universe; One Who knows the most insignificant things about me, can bring about my most distant aims."[61]

60. *Sözler*, 317 / *The Words*, 325.
61. *Mektûbat*, 301-2 / *Letters*, 356-7.

Third Piece: Part of the Third Matter of the Twelfth Note of the Seventeenth Flash.

> "And so, those who do not understand this mystery, recite for example the *Awrad-i Qudsiya-i Shah Naqshband,* which yields a hundred benefits and merits, or Jawshan al-Kabir, which yields a thousand, making some of those benefits their prime intention. Then they do not receive the benefits, and shall not receive them, and do not have the right to receive them. For the benefits may not be the reason for the invocation and may not themselves be intended and sought. For they are obtained when unsought for, as a consequence of the sincere invocation, as a favour. If they are intended, it damages the sincerity to an extent. Indeed, it ceases being worship and looses all value."[62]

Nineteenth Mystery: **Why are the people of truth and guidance, who receive God's grace and assistance, so often defeated by the people of misguidance and the unbelievers?**

It is essential to solve and understand the obscurities underlying this question. For, since the ordinary people do not have a clear understanding of it, they may be hesitant about supporting the truth and their belief. I searched for the answer in a number of *kalām* books, but could find nothing which solves it. It says in the Qur'an that victory and succour are forthcoming only through God's will. Verses of this sort are expounded in Hadiths, but the essence of the matter here, that is "why?", the Risale-i Nur has solved convincingly, as it has questions about similar matters. But without prolonging the discussion, I give the relevant places:

Habab Risalesi from *Mathnawī al-'Arabī*, page 190; *Barla Lahikası* page 272; the Fifth and Ninth Indications of the Thirteenth Flash; the beginning of the Eleventh Topic of the Eleventh Ray; the question and answer in the second part of the Seventh Flash; and the piece entitled "Why is British diplomacy victorious?" in *Asâr-ı Bedi'iye*. Now a few examples:

First Piece: Part of the beginning of the Eleventh Topic of the Eleventh Ray, the Fruits of Belief.

> "'The people of guidance are assisted and strengthened by innumerable sweet fruits and benefits like these, the fine results of good deeds, and the Most Merciful of the Merciful's compassionate succour and assistance, so why are they frequently defeated by the people of misguidance, and sometimes twenty or a hundred of them are routed?' While pondering over this, I recalled the mobilizations and angels in the Qur'an in the face of Satan's feeble machinations, and Almighty God's sending assistance to the people of belief. Since the Risale-i Nur has explained the purpose and wisdom of this with decisive proofs, we shall here make only very brief allusion to it.
>
> "Yes, sometimes in the face of a single vandal trying to set fire to a palace which a hundred men have made, the palace can remain standing only through a hundred men protecting it and by having recourse to the government and the king. For its existence is possible only through the existence of all its conditions and

62. *Lem'alar*, 132 / *The Flashes Collection*, 180.

causes, but its non-existence and destruction may occur through the non-existence of a single condition. Just as the palace may be burnt to the ground by a single match of a layabout, so with some small actions, satans from among jinn and men cause vast destruction and terrible non-physical conflagrations. Yes, the basis and leaven of all bad, evils and sins is non-existence, it is destruction. The non-existence and destruction are concealed beneath the apparent existence. Thus, relying on this point, satans from among jinn and men and evil beings withstand an infinite force with an extremely weak force, driving the people of truth and reality to always seek refuge at the Divine Court, and to flee to it. The Qur'an therefore mobilizes great forces for their protection. It gives for their use ninety-nine Divine Names, and commands them sternly to withstand those enemies."[63]

Second Piece: The Fourth of the 'Miscellaneous Matters' which were originally assigned to be the Addendum to the Twenty-Sixth Word and then were included in *Barla Lahikası*.[64] [Not included here]

Third Piece: Part of the Ninth Indication of the Thirteenth Flash.

"Why is it that the people of guidance, who are God's party, are so often defeated by the people of misguidance, who are Satan's party, despite the Glory of the World (Upon whom be blessings and peace) being at their head and their receiving so much Divine mercy and assistance and so many favours? ...

"The All-Glorious Creator of the universe has two sort of Names, those pertaining to His Glory and those pertaining to His Beauty. Since these Names require to demonstrate their decrees through different manifestations, the Glorious Creator blended together opposites in the universe. Bringing them face to face, he gave them aggressive and defensive positions, in the form of a sort of wise and beneficial contest. Through making the opposites transgress one another's bounds, He brought conflict and change into being, and made the universe subject to the law of change and transformation and the principles of progress and advancement. In human kind, the comprehensive fruit of the tree of creation, he made that law of contest in even stranger form, and opening the door to striving, which would be the means of all human progress, He gave Satan's party certain faculties with which to be able to challenge God's party.

"It is because of this subtle mystery that the prophets were often defeated before the people of misguidance. And the people of misguidance, who are extremely weak and impotent, temporarily triumph over the people of truth, who in reality are extremely strong, and struggle against them. ..."[65]

In the continuation of the same, reasons are given for the defeats of the Companions at Uhud and Hunayn.

Fourth Piece: Part of *Ṭuluât* in *Asâr-ı Bedi'iye*.[66] [Not included here]

The above are sufficient to explain the people of misguidance's side of the question. In respect of the people of truth and guidance, the Twentieth Flash, the Treatise on Sincerity, and the First Topic of the Twenty-Second Letter may be referred to, for they have solved it completely.

63. *Şualar*, 258.
64. *Barla Lahikası*, 272.
65. *Lem'alar*, 80 / *The Flashes Collection*, 115.
66. *Âsâr-ı Bedi'iye*, 106.

Hadiths

Twentieth Mystery: **It says in some Hadiths: "If the world was worth so much as a fly's wing with God, the unbeliever's could not have had even a mouthful of water from it;"[67] others say that "the world and all it contains are cursed, with the exception of knowledge, remembrance of God, and those things which assist these;"[68] other sorts of Hadith say: "Love of this world is the source of all errors."[69] In addition, the many people of reality who have abandoned the world are known as the people of perfection. However, other sound Hadiths say: "This world is the tillage of the hereafter;"[70] and "This world is a fine mount for the believer."[71]**

These two sorts of Hadiths apparently contradict each other, so it surely necessitates showing how the two are conformable, and solving this problem.

Firstly, I consulted the works of a number of learned *mujtahids* who were authorities on Hadith, known as the purified ones of the Umma, but I did not discover the solution to the problem or any explanation as to how these two sorts of Hadiths are conformable with each other. Nevertheless, they expound Hadiths of this sort excellently with a view to admonishing and enjoining asceticism and self-sufficiency. I am not going to give any examples of these to illuminate the question, or for comparison, because I would not be wrong to say that they offer no explanation of how the two sorts conform. For in former times, it was the application of Hadiths with a view to abandoning the world and asceticism that was emphasized.

We therefore seek the answer directly from the Risale-i Nur, and we see that it deals with the question in a completely original way which solves it at a fundamental level, in most convincing and explanatory fashion. Some of the relevant places are: the Ninth Principle of the Third Branch of the Twenty-Fourth Word; the Second Question of the First Addendum of the Twenty-Seventh Word; the Second and Third Stopping-Places of the Thirty-Second Word; the Second Point of the Fifth Sign of the First Station of the Twenty-Fourth Letter; the Second Question in the Third Station of the Second Ray; and *Şemme Risalesi* in *al-Mathnawī al-'Arabī*, page 349. Now one or two examples:

First Example: Part of the second question of the Addendum to the Twenty-Seventh Word.

"They say that the saints and possessors of perfection abandoned the world. It even says in a Hadith: 'Love of this world is the source of all error.' Whereas the Com-

67. This Hadith is found in numerous sources, such as: al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, iv, 306; *Tirmidhī*, iii, 261.
68. *Ibn Māja*, No: 4112; Baghāwī, *Sharḥ al-Sunna*, xiv, 230. For others, see, Badıllı, *Risale-i Nur'un Kudsi Kaynakları*, 439.
69. *Mishkāt al-Maṣabīḥ*, No: 5213; *Ḥanbal*, al-Zuhd, 111.
70. al-Nawawī, *al-Adhkār*, 129; 'Abd al-Qādir Gīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī*, 19. For others, see, *Risale-i Nur'un Kudsi Kaynakları*, 372.
71. al-Shasī, *Musnad*, No: 318.

panions were very involved in the world. It was not abandoning the world, some of the Companions were ahead of the civilized of that time even? ... It has been proved most decisively... that to love the face of the world which looks to the hereafter and that which looks to the Divine Names is not the cause of loss, but the means to perfection and attainment, and however far one goes in those two faces, the further one goes in worship and knowledge of God. The world of the Companions was in those two faces. They saw this world as the arable field of the hereafter, and sowed and reaped it. They saw beings as the mirrors of the Divine Names, and gazed on them yearningly. As for the transience of the world, it is its transitory face, which looks to man's base desires."[72]

Second Example: The Fifth Sign of the Third Aim of the Second Stopping-Place of the Thirty-Second Word.

"The world has three faces.

"**Its First Face** looks to God Almighty's Names; it displays their impress. It is a mirror to them, reflecting their meanings. This face of the world consists of innumerable letters or missives describing the Eternally Besought One. This face is utterly beautiful, and is worthy of love, not loathing.

"**Its Second Face** looks to the hereafter. It is the seed-bed of the hereafter and arable field for Paradise. It is the flower-bed of mercy. This face is also beautiful like the first one and is deserving of love not contempt.

"**Its Third Face** looks to man's base appetites. It is a veil of neglect and a plaything for satisfying the desires of the worldly. This face is ugly because it is transient and mortal; it is full of pain and it deceives. The contempt described in the Hadith and the loathing of the people of truth, then, is for this face. The importance and approbation which the All-Wise Qur'an demonstrates towards the universe and all beings is towards the first two faces."[73]

Referring readers to that treatise for further explanations, we cut this short here.

Third Example: Part of the Ninth Principle of the Third Branch of the Twenty-Fourth Word.

"For instance, there is this Hadith which has worried the heads of the unfair more than any. Its meaning is: 'If the world had as much value as a fly's wing for Almighty God, the unbelievers would not have had so much as a mouthful of water from it.' The reality of it is this: the phrase *for Almighty God* refers to the eternal realm. Yes, since a light from the eternal realm to the extent of a fly's wing is everlasting, it is greater than a temporary light that fills the face of the earth. That means it is not to say that the huge world is equal to a fly's wing, but that everyone's private world which is situated within their short lives is not equal to an everlasting Divine effulgence and bounty to the extent of a fly's wing from the eternal realm. Furthermore, the world has two faces, indeed, three faces. One is the mirrors to Almighty God's Names, another looks to the hereafter and is its arable field, and the third looks to transience and non-existence..."[74]

72. *Sözler*, 494 / *The Words*, 510-11.
73. *Sözler*, 626 / *The Words*, 653-4.
74. *Sözler*, 345 / *The Words*, 355.

Twenty-First Mystery: **It says in sound Hadiths that Hell is under the ground, but the globe is not sufficiently large to contain Hell as described in the Qur'an, or to be over it. The world's size is known. Moreover, Hell belongs to the next world, so how can the earth be over it? This needs to be solved.**

Firstly, this Hadith is found in the following sources: al-Hakim, *Mustadrak*, iv, 568, 569, 594; Ibn Hazm, *al-Faṣl fi'l-Milal*, ii, 103; Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidā'i' wa'l-Nihā'yi*, ii, 172; Ibn al-Mubarak, *al-Zuhd*, ii, 118; Imam Bayhaqi, *Shu'ab*, ii, 244. For the many others, see Badıllı, *Risale-i Nur'un Kudsi Kaynakları*, 460.

That is to say, the Hadith is definitely sound. In order to learn what the Islamic scholars had said about it, I turned to those most qualified to speak of it: ibn Hazm al-Andalusi's *al-Muḥalla bi'l-Āthār* and *al-Faṣl fi'l-Milal*; Imam Ghazzali's *Iḥyā*; Husayn al-Jisri's *al-Ḥusn al-Ḥamīdiyya*, but I could no manner of explanation other than admonition. Only, in Ibn Hazm's *al-Faṣl fi'l-Milal* it says that the heavens encompass the heavens like a dome, that the world is beneath them, and that these concepts of over and under are relative.[75] Otherwise, I could find nothing explaining how Hell is under the ground and where and what this means. Probably at that time no need was felt to ask. However, the Risale-i Nur's method is one of proving and expounding.

In the Risale-i Nur this subject is discussed at various times in various places. For example, in the Second Question of the Tenth Letter; the Third Question of the First Letter; in the middle of the Third Letter; the Arabic edition of *Ishārāt al-I'jāz* pages 185 and 192; *Asâr-ı Bedi'iye*, page 210; and so on. We quote here from two of these:

First: The Third Question of the Third Letter. [Given only in part here]

"*In Short:* Paradise and Hell are the two fruits of a branch of the tree of creation which stretches out towards eternity. The fruits' place is at the branch's tip. And they are the two results of the chain of the universe; and the places of the results are the two sides of the chain. The base and heavy are on its lower side, the luminous and elevated on its upper side. They are also the two stores of this flood of events and the immaterial produce of the earth. And the place of a store is according to the variety of the produce, the bad beneath, the good above. They are also the two pools of the flood of beings which flows in waves towards eternity. As for the pool's place, it is where the flood stops and gathers. That is, the obscene and filthy below, the good and the pure above. They are also the two places of manifestation, the one of beneficence and mercy, the other of wrath and tremendousness..."[76]

Bediuzzaman's statements that Hell is under the earth, and about its unimaginable vastness are also to be found in the treatises of the Thirtieth Flash and in the Eighth Topic of the Eleventh Ray. Those who wish may refer to them.

Second: Part of the Fifth Matter of *Muhâkemat*, in *Asâr-ı Bedi'iye*.[77] [Not included here]

75. Ibn Hazm, *al-Faṣl fi'l-Milal*, ii, 102.
76. *Mektûbat*, 10 / *Letters*, 27.
77. *Âsâr-ı Bedi'iye*, 210.

Twenty-Second Mystery: **It says in some sound Hadiths that Paradise is the source of rivers like the Nile and Euphrates. Other Hadiths say that they continuously pour out of Paradise drop by drop. Such Hadiths are indisputably sound yet some scholars of religion and even of Hadiths have objected to them. In al-Azhar University in 1954 even, some teachers who denied the authenticity of these Hadiths openly taught that it was doubtful. However, it is unanimously agreed by Sunni scholars that the authenticity of Hadiths in Bukhari and Muslim the soundness of which is agreed, should in no way be doubted. However, those who make their own minds the measure of their judgement attack Hadiths like this, saying that they are irrational.**

I am not going to mention their names here; certainly those who followed the debate know them.

Some of the sources of the Hadith are as follows: *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ii, 134; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Muslim*, iv, 2183 no: 2839; *Musnad al-Aḥmad*, ii, 289; *Mishkāt al-Maṣabīh*, no: 5628; narrated from Malik ibn Sa'sa'a and Abu Hurayra.

For Bediuzzaman's interpretation of the profound meaning of this unanimously agreed sound Hadith, see: The First Station of the Twentieth Word, p. 250; The Supreme Sign (the Seventh Ray), p. 112; and Badıllı, *Mufassal Tarihçe-i Hayat*, iii, 1660.

In 1953 and 1954, some of the al-Azhar teachers, because they could not comprehend the apparent meanings of indubitably sound Hadiths on this subject and ones like it, and their allegorical interpretations, chose the easy way out and either did not accept them or turned a blind eye to them, and said they were doubtful. For this reason, a number of students from Turkey who were studying there at that time, chiefly Emirdağlı Ali Kılıçarslan, asked Ustad Bediuzzaman by letter to solve the question. Bediuzzaman wrote a lengthy reply which was signed by the students attending him at that time, and the letter was published that *'Id* (Qurban Bayramı) as a congratulations, and disseminated among the Risale-i Nur students as a 'Lahika' letter.

First: Parts of the above-mentioned letter.[78] [Not included here]

Second: Part of the Fourth Degree of The Supreme Sign, the Seventh Ray.

> "The traveller then looks at the rivers and sees that the benefits inherent in them, the functions they perform, and their continual replenishment, are inspired by such wisdom and mercy as indisputably to prove that all rivers, springs, streams and great waterways flow forth from the treasury of Mercy of the Compassionate One, the Lord of Glory and Generosity. They are preserved and dispensed, indeed, in so extraordinary a fashion that it is said 'Four rivers flow forth from Paradise.' That is, they transcend by far apparent causes, and flow forth instead from the treasury of a non-material Paradise, from the superabundance of an unseen and inexhaustible source. For example, the blessed Nile, that turns the sandy land of Egypt into a Paradise, flows from the Mountains of the Moon in the south without ever being exhausted, as if it were a small sea. If the water that flowed down the river in six months were gathered together in the form of a mountain and then frozen, it would be larger than those mountains. But the place in the mountains where the water is lodged and stored is less than a sixth of their mass. As for the water that replenishes the river, the rain that enters the reservoir of the river is very sparse in that torrid region and is quickly swallowed up by the thirsty soil; hence it is incapable of maintaining the equilibrium of the river. A tradition has thus grown up that the blessed Nile springs, in miraculous fashion, from an unseen Paradise. This tradition has profound meaning and expresses a beautiful truth."[79]

78. Badıllı, *Bediüzzaman Said-i Nursî, Mufassal Tarihçe-i Hayatı*, Istanbul 1990, 1660-7; *Sözler*, 251 /*The Words*, 258-9.

Twenty-Third Mystery: **The sound Hadith stating that Musa (Upon whom be peace) struck the Angel Azra'il (Upon whom be peace) in the eye, even putting it out.**

Despite being certain and indubitably sound, some scholars who rely on their own intellects have attacked this Hadith, causing others to doubt it. Its sources, which after the Qur'an, are considered to be indisputably authentic, are: *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ii, 113; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Muslim*, iv, 1843; *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Ibn Hibban, viii, 38; and Baghawi's *Sharḥ al-Sunna*, v, 265. For further sources see, *Risale-i Nur'un Kudsi Kaynakları*, 689.

Firstly: Part of Bediuzzaman's reply about this Hadith: the Second Part of the Twenty-Eighth Letter.

> "This was written to put a stop to and solve an important argument about the Hadith which describes how Moses (Upon whom be peace) struck Azra'il (Upon whom be peace) in the eye, and the rest of the story... Thus, according to this way, Azra'il (Upon whom be peace) has a face and an eye which looks to every individual. Moses (Upon whom be peace) striking Azra'il (Upon whom be peace) was not directed at his essential self and his true form, and it was not an insult, or non-acceptance; he struck, and strikes, in the eye the one who drew attention to his death and wanted to prevent his work, because he wanted his duties of prophethood to continue permanently."[80]

Twenty-Fourth Mystery: **Some sound Hadiths state that the world rests on an Ox and a Fish**

Although this Hadith or narration is definitely sound and is included in numerous Qur'anic commentaries and collections of Hadith, some religious scholars, relying on their own ideas, have preferred to say it is dubious, saying that it is "unauthenticated and a superstition or *Isra'iliyat*," therefore denying a profound truth. The matter has therefore remained obscure and something of a mystery. Because even if scholars of that sort have objected to it innumerable times, it is still in the reliable commentaries and books of Hadith.

First I shall give some of the sources of this narration or Hadith, then some of the places Bediuzzaman has expounded it. A few of the reliable sources are: al-Bazzār, *Kashf al-Astār al-Zawā'id*, ii, 450; al-Hakim, *al-Mustadrak*, iii, 588;

79. *Şualar*, 112 / *The Supreme Sign*, 33-4.
80. *Mektûbat*, 350-3 / *Letters*, 413-6.

Suyuti, *al-Fatḥ al-Kabīr*, ii, 201, 209; Suyuti, *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, vi, 249. For further sources, see, *Risale-i Nur'un Kudsi Kaynakleri*, 397.

Some of the places in the Risale-i Nur where it is expounded and explained are *Asâr-ı Bedi'iye*, 201; the Second Station of The Shining Proof (Fifteenth Ray); Eleventh Topic of the Eleventh Ray; and First Station of the Fourteenth Word.

First Piece: From *Muhâkemat*.[81] [Not included here]

Bediuzzaman's approach in this work, which he wrote in his youth, is highly learned and analytical. He takes into account the views both of the traditionists, and the geographers and astronomers. Basically, what Bediuzzaman does not accept here and what he is combatting, is the lengthy story-like form some people had added onto the Hadith, resembling the well-know *Isra'iliyyat*, which was extraordinary and completely unreasonable, as well as being opposed to the order of the universe and laws of creation. In the subsequent two pieces given below, Bediuzzaman deals more with the Hadith's meaning and proving its correctness.

Second Piece: Part of the Eleventh Topic from the Eleventh Ray.

> "Through this fruit, for example, the creation of the earth and its natural duties, which the soulless laws of philosophy show to be dark and desolate, are placed in luminous familiar fashion on the shoulders of, that is, under the supervision of, two angels called Thawr (the Bull) and Hut (the Fish). And a truth, a substance of the hereafter called *sakhra,* is sent as an everlasting foundation stone of the transitory earth, that is, as a sign that in the future part of it will be transformed into eternal Paradise, and it is made a point of support for the angels Thawr and Hut. This was narrated by the old prophets of the Children of Israel, and also by Ibn 'Abbas. Unfortunately, in the course of time, this sacred meaning and allegory was taken literally by the ordinary people and acquired a form outside the bounds of reason. Since the angels travel through earth and rock at the centre of the earth the same as they do through the air, they, and the earth, surely have no need of physical rocks and a fish and ox to support them."[82]

Third Piece: The First Station of the Fourteenth Word, which treats the subject in depth, analyzing the Hadith's meanings, which are correct, and making it completely clear. I include two paragraphs by way of example. [Not included here.]

One of the two remaining aspects of the Hadith: one of the most important components of mankind's commerce is agriculture, which for thousands of years has rested on the ox. The other is the fish, which Bediuzzaman says is a major source of livelihood and trade, and that the Hadith alludes to this aspect as well.

As for its other aspect, even if it is not correct, the ancient philosophers in particular supposed the sun to pass through the twelve constellations in its annual rotation. However, according to modern science, the earth shows the constellations in its annual rotation. Thus, the first time the question was asked, the earth was in the constellation of the Fish, and according to one narration, when it was asked a month later, it was in the constellation of the Bull; it was this that the Hadith was alluding to. Those interested may refer to the original.[83]

81. *Âsâr-ı Bedi'iye*, 201-3.
82. *Şualar*, 263.
83. *Lem'alar*, 90-2 / *The Flashes Collection*, 127-31.

Twenty-Fifth Mystery: **The Hadith(s) stating that the universe was created out of the seed of the Light of Muhammad (PBUH)**

This exceedingly wondrous matter is something believed by all people of faith and has become a fact established through the acceptance of all the Umma of Muhammad (PBUH). It is alluded to by Hadiths and narrations; also all those who have written *'mevlids'* have expressed it in poetry. Many of the great Islamic scholars, such as Imam Ghazzali, Imam-ı Rabbani, Imam Bajuri, and Ibn al-Hajar al-Makki, have discussed the side of this question that looks to the conscience and heart, without providing any rational explanations of it. The great tradionists made some criticisms and corrections as required by the principles of the science of Hadiths. Now I shall note the sources of some of the Hadiths which allude to the basis of the matter, then again see how the Risale-i Nur proves it rationally and according to scholarly principles.

The sources of the Hadiths are: 'Ajluni, *Kashf al-Khafā'*, ii, 164; 'Ali al-Qari, *Sharḥ al-Shifā'*, i, 6; *Naẓm al-Mutanāthir fi'l-Ḥadīth al-Mutawātir*, 11; *al-Sīrat al-Ḥalabiyya*, i, 240; 'Ajluni, *Kashf al-Khafā'*, i, 265. For further sources, see, *Risale-i Nur'un Kudsi Kaynakları*, 814. Suyuti, *al-Ḥāwī li'l-Fatāwā*, ii, 545; Qastalani, *al-Mawāhib al-Ladunniyya*, i, 25-83; al-San'ani, *al-Muṣannaf*, xi, 276. For further sources, see, *Risale-i Nur'un Kudsi Kaynakları*, 434.

This matter is discussed in several places in the Risale-i Nur in the light of the above Hadiths and narrations, and a different aspect of it is proved. For example, the First and Second Difficulties in the Third Principle of the Thirty-First Word; the First Addendum of the Twenty-Fourth Letter, and particularly its conclusion; *al-Mathnawī al-'Arabī*, pp. 59, 177, 224; *Mesnevi-i Nûriye* (trans: Abdülmecid), 117; Seventh Topic of the Eleventh Ray; the Fourth Sign of the Fifth Point of the Thirtieth Flash, on the Divine Name of Ever-Living; the third part of the Fifteenth Ray, The Shining Proof; Arabic ed. *Ishārāt al-I'jāz*, 124. And so on.

And so, some of these passages:

The First: Part of the First Difficulty in the Third Principle of the Thirty-First Word.

> "Thus, when the universe is considered from the point of view of wisdom, it is seen to bear the meaning of a mighty tree. For just as a tree has branches, leaves, blossom and fruit, so too in this lower world, which is one part of the tree of creation, there are elements, which are like its branches; plants and trees, which are like its leaves; animals, which are like its flowers; and man, which is like the fruit.
>
> "Furthermore, the Divine Name of All-Wise requires that a law of the All-Glorious Maker that is in force in trees generally will also be in force in the mighty tree of creation. Since this is so, wisdom requires that the tree of creation also, be formed from a seed, and such a seed that contains the essentials and principles of other worlds besides the corporeal world. For the fundamental and original seed of the universe, which comprises thousands of different worlds, cannot be a scrap of desiccated matter.
>
> "Since before the tree of the universe there was no tree of the same kind, it is also a requirement of the Name of All-Wise that meaning and light, which are like

a source and seed to it, should be clothed with the garment of a fruit on the tree of the universe. For a seed cannot remain permanently unclothed. And since at the beginning of creation it was not clothed in the garment of a fruit, it would surely be clothed in it at the end. And since that fruit is mankind. And since, as was proved above, the most famous fruit and sublime result from among mankind, who attracted the attention of all and confined to himself the gaze of a fifth of mankind, and with his moral and spiritual qualities caused the world to consider him with either feelings of love or of wonder, is the Person of Muhammad (Upon whom be blessings and peace), most certainly, light, which was the seed from which the universe was formed, would become clothed in corporeality in his person and would appear in the form of an ultimate fruit.

"O listener! Do not consider it improbable that this strange and mighty universe is created from the particular essence of a human being! Why should the All-Powerful One of Glory Who creates a huge pine tree, which is like a sort of world, from a seed the size of a grain of wheat not create the universe from 'the Light of Muhammad' (Upon whom be blessings and peace)? Why should He not be able to do so?"[84]

In order to understand this piece fully, one needs to read the whole of this treatise carefully, and really the whole of the Risale-i Nur.

The Second: Towards the end of the Fourth Sign of the Fifth Treatise of the Thirtieth Flash.

"Yes, just as life is the distilled essence of the universe; and consciousness and sense perception are distilled from life and are the essence of life; and intelligence too is distilled from consciousness and sense perception and is the essence of consciousness; and spirit is the pure, unsullied substance of life, its stable and autonomous essence; so too, the physical and spiritual life of Muhammad (PBUH) is the distilled quintessence of the life and spirit of the universe; and the Messengership of Muhammad (PBUH) is the very purest essence distilled from the senses, consciousness, and intelligence of the universe. Indeed, the physical and spiritual life of Muhammad (PBUH), is, through the testimony of its works, the very life of the life of the universe. And the Messengership of Muhammad (PBUH) is the consciousness and light of the universe's consciousness. While the Qur'anic revelation, according to the testimony of its living truths, is the spirit of the universe's life and the intelligence of its consciousness.

"Yes, yes, yes! If the light of the Messengership of Muhammad (PBUH) was to depart from the universe, the universe would die. If the Qur'an was to depart, the universe would go mad, the earth would lose its head and its reason; it would even strike its now unconscious head on a planet and Doomsday would occur."[85]

The Third: Part of *Habbe Risalesi* from *Mesnevi-i Nuriye* (Badıllı trans.).[86] [Not included here]

The Fourth: From Arabic ed. *Ishārāt al-I'jāz*.[87] [Not included here]

84. *Sözler*, 579 / *The Words*, 605-6.
85. *Lem'alar*, 335 / *The Flashes Collection*, 434-5.
86. *Mesnevi-i Nûriye* [Trans: Badıllı], 243.
87. *Ishārāt al-I'jāz* [Arabic orig.], 224.

Twenty-Sixth Mystery: **Since the signs of the end of time, known as *ashrāṭ al-sā'a*, and events like the appearance of the Mahdi have not occurred exactly as predicted by sound narrations according to their literal meanings, some people have had the mistaken idea that they are impossible according to the laws of creation; yet according to the Islamic beliefs of the Sunnis, it is obligatory to believe in such narrations according to their literal meaning, so how can this riddle and difficulty be solved?**

I firstly wanted to seek the answer to this truly important, and as much as it is important, strange and insoluble question, in the books on Islamic beliefs. I looked first at Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifa's *Fiqh al-Akbar*, and in the original text it says: "... and the appearance of the Dajjal (Antichrist), and of Gog and Magog, the sun rising in the west, and the descent of Jesus from the skies, and the other signs of the end of time are to be found in sound Hadiths, and they are true and will occur."[88] It is understood from this that one has to believe in narrations about this as they are. The original text of *'Aqā'id al-Nasafī* says exactly the same thing.[89]

That is, rulings about Qur'anic verses and Hadiths are made according to their apparent meanings. Nevertheless, the scholars of the principles of religion laid down the rule: "If anything in the Qur'an and Hadiths (*naql*) is contrary to reason, it is interpreted." As in the discussion about the 'negating' Divine attributes in his work *Nahj al-An'ām*, the famous Molla Khalil-i Si'ird, about whom Bediuzzaman said "his word is proof," it is said: "If some meanings of verses and Hadiths appear to be reasonably impossible, interpret them; do not leave them to the people of misguidance."

Again on this subject, the famous scholar Husayn al-Jisri said in his work *al-Ḥusn al-Ḥamīdiyya*:

"The incontrovertible points of the Shari'a are the Qur'anic verses and unanimously related Hadiths about worship and social relations, and some other famous Hadiths. We are obliged to rely on these incontrovertible points in the injunctions of the Shari'a, so it is obligatory to rely on them in questions of belief. Then, it is obligatory that we rely on the apparent meanings of all verses and Hadiths, and those that are clearly comprehensible. It is certainly not permissible to prefer some other meaning to the apparent meaning because of interpretation. However, if we are faced with definite reasonable evidence and it abrogates the apparent meaning, then it is understood that the apparent meaning was not what was intended. We may then interpret that decisive verse or Hadith for some other meaning..."[90]

This means that those with sound knowledge, when necessary, may, as indicated by a verse of the Qur'an, interpret the apparent meaning for another meaning. Among the Islamic scholars, there have been those who have done this, even if they have been few in number. For example, those who have studied Ibn

88. 'Alī al-Qārī, *Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, 166-8.
89. al-Nasafī, *'Aqā'id*, 14.
90. al-Jisrī, *al-Ḥusn al-Ḥamīdiyya*, 120.

al-Kathir's *Bidā'yi' wa Nihā'yi* and Barzanji's *al-Ishā'* know that they have interpreted the apparent meanings of the occasional Hadith. Nevertheless, the matter is not solved completely.

Now we take the matter to Bediuzzaman and study what he wrote about this subject in his works. It, that is, the solving of this mystery, is discussed and analyzed in particular in several places. For example, the Third Branch of the Twenty-Fourth Word; the third section of the First Letter; the Fourth Question of the Fifteenth Letter; the Fourth Principle of the Fourth Sign of the Nineteenth Letter; the second question and answer in the Fourth Indication of the Seventh Part of the Twenty-Ninth Letter, and in the Sixth Indication; *al-Mathnawī al-'Arabī* (latest ed.) page 445; the Fifth Ray and especially its introduction; *Kastamonu Lahikası* pages 26, 80; and some letters in *Emirdağ Lahikası*. And some pieces as examples:

The First Example: Part of the Eighth Principle of the Third Branch of the Twenty-Fourth Word.

> "Now, the difference in the narrations about individuals like the Mahdi, and their meaning, is this: those who expounded Hadiths applied the text of the Hadiths to their own interpretations and commentaries. For example, since the centre of power at that time was Damascus or Medina, they imagined the events connected with the Mahdi and Sufyan in places like Basra, Kufa, and Syria, which were in the region of those centres, and expounded them accordingly. Moreover, they imagined the mighty works pertaining to the collective identity or community which those individuals represent to be in their persons and expounded them in that way, so that they ascribed a form to them whereby when those extraordinary individuals appear, everyone will recognize them. However, as we said, this world is an arena of trial, the door is opened to the reason, but the will is not taken from the hand. So, when those individuals, and even the terrible Dajjal, appear, many people and himself even will not know to start with that he is the Dajjal. Rather, those individuals of the end of time will be known through the insight of the light of belief."[91]

It is necessary to read all twelve of these principles in order to gain a complete understanding of this matter, and we refer readers to them for now.

Second Example: Part of the introduction of the Fifth Ray.[92] [Not included here]

We include too a couple of narrations and their explanation, which have been interpreted on the basis of firmly founded knowledge.[93] [Not included here]

Those who wish may read the twenty-three matters interpreted in the Fifth Ray, together with its introduction. Not wanting to prolong the discussion with further examples, I refer those interested to the above-mentioned references so that they may see that the question has truly been solved.

91. *Sözler*, 344 / *The Words*, 353-4.
92. *Şualar*, 578-82.
93. *Şualar*, 584, 586.

Sufism

Twenty-Seventh Mystery: **It states in sound Hadiths that "Almighty God created Adam, or man, in His own form, or in the form of the Most Merciful."**

This Hadith is sound and unanimously reported. But in its literal meaning, when not interpreted, it does not conform with Islamic beliefs. It is because of this that some sufis have expounded it in inappropriate manner. That is to say, the Hadith has an 'obscure' aspect. In the face of the sufis' inappropriate interpretations, some externalist scholars who rely on their own ideas, have gone so far as denying the Hadith. Without exacerbating the situation, I give its sources:

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, iv, 160; viii, 62; ix, 88; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Muslim*, iv, 1283; viii, 82, 366, Nos: 28, 115. For further sources, see, *Risale-i Nur'un Kudsi Kaynakları*, 2nd. ed., 360.

The scholars of the principles of religion and of *kalām* have dealt with this sound Hadith and have interpreted it in various ways. Of these, Imam Ibn Furak's *Mashkil al-Ḥadīth* (*tahqiq:* Musa Muhammad 'Ali) from page 45, offers lengthy discussions. It gives various interpretations based on a grammatical analysis, but still, when compared with the Risale-i Nur, it is seen that it has not solved the allegorical aspects of the Hadith. Despite the lengthy analyses of the author and its editor, it is not solved and the obscure aspects remain. Only in one place in all these does it say, "What is meant by God's form is His attributes." Now to move on to the manner in which the Risale-i Nur expounds the Hadith:

First Piece: Part of the Second Station of the Fourteenth Flash.

> "Indeed, the Most Pure and Holy Deity, Who administers with order the whole universe as though it was a palace or house, and spins the stars as though they were particles and causes them to travel through space with wisdom and ease, and employs minute particles as though they were orderly officials, has no partner, match, opposite, or equal. So also according to the meaning of the verse: *There is nothing whatever like unto Him, and He hears and sees [all things]*, He has no form, like, or peer, there is nothing resembling or similar to Him. However, according to the meaning and manner of comparison of the following verse, *And His is the highest similitude in the heavens and the earth, and He is Exalted in Might, Full of Wisdom*, His actions, attributes, and Names may be considered. That is to say, allegory and comparison may be used in connection with His actions. One aim of the above-mentioned Hadith is as follows: 'Man is in a form showing the Divine Name of All-Merciful in its entirety.'
>
> "For sure, as we explained before, just as the Divine Name of All-Merciful is manifest through the rays of a thousand and one Names on the face of the universe, and is apparent through the innumerable manifestations of God's absolute dominicality on the face of the earth, so also is the complete manifestation of the Name All-Merciful apparent in a small measure in man's comprehensive form, like on the face of the earth and the face of the universe.
>
> "A further indication is this: the evidences to the Necessarily Existent One of places of manifestation like animate creatures and man, who are proofs of and

mirrors to the All-Merciful and Compassionate One, are so certain, clear, and obvious that just as it may be said of a shining mirror which reflects the image of the sun: "That mirror is the sun," indicating to the clarity of its brilliance and evidence, so also it has been said and may be said: 'Man is in the form of the All-Merciful One,' indicating to the clearness of his evidence and completeness of his connection." [94]

Second Piece: Part of a letter from *Emirdağ Lahikası*.[95] [Not included here]

Third Piece: Passages from the Thirty-Third Word.[96] [Not included here]

Twenty-Eighth Mystery: **Some of the utterances of the great saints about matters like the mountain 'Kaf' and such like do not conform to the physical sciences and to observation. Furthermore, some of the predictions of the saints do not occur as they foretold.**

This matter is truly an obscure mystery that needs to be solved. For when statements, arrived at through illumination, of persons whom most Muslims know of and trust, and predictions about the future, turn out not to conform to the physical world or reality, it gives rise to doubts concerning them, particularly among the ordinary people. Since such persons are important religious figures, doubts about them indirectly cause doubt about religion. Thanks be to God, the Risale-i Nur has solved this important riddle and obscure matter as well.

The comparison illustrating this in the Second Branch of the Twenty-Fourth Word; the First Matter of the Eighteenth Letter; *Emirdağ Lahikası*, ii, 111; the First Question of the Sixteenth Flash; the Third Matter of *Muhakemat*; and the part 'A matter related to belief,' in the piece *Sırr-ı İnna a'teyna'*.

First Piece: Part of the First Matter of the Eighteenth Letter.

"They are the people of truth and reality. They are also saints and those who witness the realities. They saw correctly what they saw, but since they were not correct in declarations they made while in the state of illumination and witnessing, which is without comprehension, and in their interpretations of their visions, which were like dreams, they were partially incorrect. People of illumination and witnessing of that sort cannot interpret their own visions while in such a state, just as a person cannot interpret his own dream while dreaming it. Those who can interpret them are the exact scholars of the legacy of prophethood, called 'the purified ones.' For sure, when they rise to the rank of the 'purified ones,' the people of witnessing of that group understand their errors through the guidance of the Qur'an and the *Sunna*, and they correct them; and they did correct them."[97]

Second Piece: Part of the Third Matter of *Muhâkemat*.[98] [Not included here]

Third Piece: Part of the First Matter of the Sixteenth Flash.

"Why do people of sainthood and illumination such as that make predictions that are contrary to reality? They asked me, and a summary of the reply I gave them, with which I was inspired, is this:

94. *Lem'alar*, 101 / *The Flashes Collection*, 139.
95. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, i, 145.
96. *Sözler*, 686-8 / *The Words*, 718-20.
97. *Mektûbat*, 81 / *Letters*, 104.
98. *Âsâr-ı Bedi'iye*, 204.

"It is said in a Hadith: '*Sometimes a calamity is visited on a person, but it is confronted with alms-giving, and is repelled.*' The underlying meaning of this Hadith shows that while appointed events are going to come to pass through certain conditions, they do not occur. That is to say, the appointed events of which the people of illumination are aware are not absolute, but restricted by certain conditions; on the conditions not being present, the event does not occur. However the event, like the appointed hour of death, which is suspended, is written and determined in the Tablet of Appearance and Dissolution, which is a sort of notebook of the Pre-Eternal Tablet. It is only extremely rarely that illuminations penetrate as far as the Pre-Eternal Tablet; mostly they cannot rise that far."[99]

Fourth Piece: Bediuzzaman's comparison of his own intuitive disclosures.[100] [Not included here]

Twenty-Ninth Mystery: **Should the evil-commanding soul be killed, or should it continue in order to worship?**

It is known by everyone that in this matter the sufis have put greatest emphasis on actions related to killing the soul. Although there are slight differences between those who practise public recitations and those who practise silent recitation, they are in agreement on abandoning all other than God and annihilating the soul. However, it is known that the Companions of the Prophet (PBUH) and subsequent generations approached the matter differently. Imam-ı Rabbani has described this very well in one or two of his letters. That is, in the age of the Companions, the perfections of Prophethood prevailed, but subsequently they diminished slightly, till at the end of the third century they disappeared completely, and after this the ways of sainthood (*velayet*) started to appear.[101]

So to see which is in conformity with wisdom and suitable for perfect worship, we turn to the Risale-i Nur of Bediuzzaman, and receive our reply from the Ninth Letter; the Four Steps, which is the Addendum to the Twenty-Sixth Word; and a passage from *Şemme Risalesi* in *Mathnawī al-'Arabī*.

First Piece: Part of the Ninth Letter.

"...The intense curiosity, fervent love, terrible greed, and stubborn desires, and other intense emotions in man's nature were given in order to gain the matters of the hereafter. To direct those emotions in intense fashion towards transitory worldly matters means giving the price of eternal diamonds for pieces of glass that are to be smashed. A point has occurred to me in connection with this, and I shall tell it. It is like this: passionate love is an ardent sort of love. When it is directed towards transitory objects, it either causes its owner perpetual torment and pain, or, since the metaphorical beloved is not worth the price of such fervent love, it causes the lover to search for an eternal beloved. Then metaphorical love is transformed into true love. Thus, there are in man thousands of emotions, each of which has two degrees, one metaphorical, the other, true..."[102]

The answers to another aspect of the 'obscure' side of this matter are to be

99. *Lem'alar*, 103 / *The Flashes Collection*, 142-3.
100. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, ii, 111.
101. Imam-ı Rabbani, *Maktūbāt*, No: 260.
102. *Mektûbat*, 33 / *Letters*, 51.

found in the pieces of the Risale-i Nur given in the Twentieth Mystery above, and may be referred to.

Second Piece: *Şemme Risalesi*, 3rd part, *Mesnevi-i Nuriye* (trans. Badıllı) p. 475. [Not included here]

Third Piece: Part of the Addendum to the Twenty-Sixth Word.

"The ways leading to Almighty God are truly numerous. While all true ways are taken from the Qur'an, some are shorter, safer, and more general than others. Of these ways taken from the Qur'an is that of impotence, poverty, compassion, and reflection, from which, with my defective understanding, I have benefited.

"Indeed, like ecstatic love, impotence is a path which, by way of worship, leads to winning God's love; but it is safer. Poverty too leads to the Divine Name of All-Merciful. Like ecstatic love, compassion also leads to the Name of All-Compassionate, but it is a sharper and broader path. Also like ecstatic love, reflection leads to the Name of All-Wise, but it is a richer, broader, and more brilliant path. This path consists not of ten steps like the 'ten subtle faculties' of some of the *tariqats* employing silent recollection, nor of seven stages like the 'seven souls' of those practicing public recitation, but of Four Steps. It is reality [*haqiqat*], rather than a *tariqat*. It is Shari'a."[103]

Thirtieth Mystery: Intention and point of view can transform ordinary actions into diamonds

This strange and very important statement about intention and point of view was made of course by Bediuzzaman. There are numerous statements about intention in Hadiths, with strong encouragement to the effect that sincerity and a good intention is the spirit of everything. There is no need to note them here. So we suffice with a Hadith which was reported unanimously, the meaning of which is: "Actions are judged according to the intention. Everyone will be rewarded for their actions only in accordance with their intentions."[104]

According to the meaning Bediuzzaman arrived at, ordinary actions may be transformed into worship through intention; so too, according to the viewpoint, physical sciences can become knowledge of God. This statement is to be found only in the Risale-i Nur. If someone is able to find something similar, he should point it out.

I looked at various passages in the Risale-i Nur to see how the question is dealt with. It is mentioned in several places. For instance, the Second and Third Fruits of the Fifth Branch of the Twenty-Fourth Word; *Katre Risalesi* in *Mathnawī al-'Arabī*, pages 105, 109, 327, 330, and 481; the Eleventh Flash; *Lema'at* in *Asâr-ı Bedi'iye* page 558. As well as in other places in various ways. Now some examples:

First: Part of the Second Fruit of the Fifth Branch of the Twenty-Fourth Word. (About intention.)

"*If you say:* 'How can I respond to these countless, universal bounties with my limited and partial thanks?'

103. *Sözler*, 476 / *The Words*, 491.
104. *Riyazu's-Salihîn* [Turk. trans.], i, 3.

"*The Answer:* With a universal intention and boundless belief... For example, a man enters a king's presence with a gift worth five *kurush*, and he sees that other gifts worth millions have arrived from acceptable people, and have been lined up there. It occurs to him: 'My present is nothing. What shall I do?' And he says suddenly: 'My Lord! I offer you all these valuable gifts in my name. For you are worthy of them. If I had the power, I would have given you gifts equal to them.' Thus, the king, who has need of nothing and accepts his subjects' gifts as a sign of their loyalty and respect, accepts that wretched man's universal intention and wish, and the worthiness of his fine and exalted belief as though they were the greatest gift."

Second: Part of the Ninth Point of the Eleventh Flash.

"Actually following to the letter every aspect of the Practices of the Prophet (PBUH) is only bestowed on the highest of the elite. If it is not possible to follow them in practice, everyone can seek to do so by intention, purpose, and by supporting them and being biased towards them."[105]

Third: Part of *Katre Risalesi* in *Mathnawī al-'Arabī*.

"In the forty years of my life and thirty years of study, I have learnt only four words and four phrases. They shall be explained in detail, but here only alluded to briefly. The aim of the words is 'the meaning of a thing which signifies another' (*mâna-yı harfî*), 'the meaning of a thing which signifies itself only' (*mâna-yı ismî*), 'intention,' and 'point of view.' It is like this:

"Everything other than Almighty God (that is, the universe) should be considered as signifying one other than itself, its Maker; it should be looked at on His account. To regard it as signifying itself and to look on it on account of causes is an error. Yes, everything has two aspects. One looks to the Creator, the other to creation. The aspect which looks to creation should be like a lace veil or transparent piece of glass over the aspect looking to the Creator; like a veil over that aspect which displays it. Therefore, when bounties are considered, the Bestower of Bounties should come to mind; when art is beheld, the Maker should be thought of; and when causes are held in view, the true Causer of Effects should come to mind and be pondered over.

"Similarly, 'point of view' and 'intention' change the nature of things. They transform sins into meritorious acts, and meritorious acts into sins. Yes, intention turns a habitual action into worship, and turns worship performed for show into a sin. If material things [physical sciences] are considered on account of causes, it is ignorance, while if they are considered on account of God, it is knowledge of God."[106]

Fourth: Part of *Katre Risalesi*, Introduction.[107] [Not included here]

Fifth: Part of *Şemme Risalesi* Part 2, in *Mathnawī al-'Arabī*.[108]

Sixth: Part of *Lema'at*.[109] [Not included here]

Also, if one studies carefully the Sixth Topic of the Eleventh Ray keeping the above in mind, it will be seen how intention and viewpoint transform commonplace physical sciences into knowledge of God. The curious may refer to that too.

105. *Lem'alar*, 56 / *The Flashes Collection*, 88.
106. *Mesnevi-i Nûriye* [Trans: Badıllı], 79.
107. Ibid., 148.
108. Ibid., 399-400.
109. *Âsâr-ı Bedi'iye*, 558.

Thirty-First Mystery: The possibility and explanation of some of the prophets, and even saints, plucking the fruits of Paradise and bringing them to earth

It is compulsory according to the unanimous view of the Sunnis to believe and assent to prophets' miracles and wonder-working of the saints. See for example, Imam Bajuri's *Sharḥ Jawhar al-Tawḥīd* pp. 340-2.

Yes, besides his many unanimously reported miracles, our Master God's Messenger (PBUH) —as an instance of wonder-working, and as is recorded in certain Hadiths and narrations, broke off a bunch of grapes in Paradise and ate them. For the sources see, *Risale-i Nur'un Kudsi Kaynakları*, page 775, No: 771. And Zacharia (Upon whom be peace) seeing various fruits which were out of season in Mary's (Upon whom be peace) room, as is stated by Sura Al-i Imran v. 38, was not as prophet but as saint. Similarly, wonder-working of this sort of some of the great saints of the Islamic Umma is well-known and unanimously reported. Just as we definitely accept the occurrence of these, so the only scholar who has proved their possibility this age has been Bediuzzaman. Although there are accounts in the old books of sufism and Islamic beliefs describing the occurrence of such marvels, they contain no rational proofs. The Risale-i Nur, however, discusses and proves the possibility of their occurrence, one example of which is among the pieces of the Twenty-Eighth Flash.

> "Also, it is said that some of the people of prophethood and some wonder-workers as though pluck from close to the fruits of Paradise, which according to incontestable verses of the Qur'an, is above the heavens, and sometimes gaze on Paradise from near at hand. This matter, which concerns infinite distance within infinite proximity, is not conformable with the understanding of the present age..."[110]

The Fifteenth and Thirty-First Words come to mind at this point, not directly in relation to this subject, but proving with numerous scholarly evidences the existenec of a way to ascend to the heavens, and the possibility of the Prophet's Ascension. Referring the curious to those treatises, we cut this short here.

Thirty-Second Mystery: The true nature of the Unity of Existence

The master of the way of the Unity of Existence was Muhyiddin al-'Arabi, al-Shaykh al-Akbar, as is well-known. Although the principles of this way and those of the Sunni beliefs do not completely conform to each other, it cannot be said that Sunni scholars have set out both sides —that is, the principles on which the Unity of Existence is based and the fundamental principles of the Sunnis— with complete clarity. Thus, because both sides of the matter, but particularly the sources of the way of the Unity of Existence have not been set out precisely, the matter has remained obscure to a degree and at odds. In bigotted manner some externalist scholars have attacked it unfairly, and have gone so far as to accuse its founder, Muhyiddin, of unbelief and misguidance. Other religious scholars who were fairer but did not go into the matter in sufficient depth, said that he

110. *Lem'alar*, 280 / *The Flashes Collection*, 376.

was an ecstatic who got carried away. In his discussion about Muhyiddin in his *Maktubat*, Imam-ı Rabbani, Shaykh Ahmad al-Sirhindi, criticized the Unity of Existence severely. However, many great saints from among the sufis have accepted it as a way of truth, and have even followed it. Thus, down to the present it has remained something of a mystery and somewhat vague. I do not consider it necessary to describe here the various disputes concerning it. It will be of little value to describe the fierce disputes between Imam Sibqi', who answered Ibn Taymiyya's relentless attacks, and Ibn al-Hajar al-Makki. And the Unity of Existence and some of the Sunnis replying to it, and others of the Sunnis not doing anything although they knew it to be wrong —I have not repeated this since it is well-known.

Bediuzzaman too did not ignore the question, he studied it, and just as he solved numerous questions related to religion, so he solved this easily and explained it. There is discussion of it in several of his works, both early and later. For example, in the middle of *Isharat* in *Asâr-ı Bedi'iye*; in the section *Telvih* and *Işaret* in the First Aim of *Muhâkemat*; the Second Point of the Eighteenth Letter; at the beginning and end of the Ninth Flash; in several pieces of the Twenty-Eighth Flash; and in *Barla Lahikası*.

We see that Bediuzzaman discussed the question from several angles when analyzing it. Firstly, what the bases of the Unity of Existence are and how it arose, and secondly, its errors compared with the principles of the Sunnis, and thirdly, how disseminating this way at the present time will cause much harm. By way of example, we include the following:

First Piece: Part of the Ninth Flash.

> "*Question:* Muhyiddin al-'Arabi considered the Unity of Existence to be of the highest level. Likewise, some of the great saints who took the path of love followed him. However, you say that this matter is not of the highest level, and is not real; that it is rather the way, to a degree, of those who become intoxicated and immersed in the Divine, and of the people of love and ecstasy. So what, briefly, is the high level of the affirmation of Divine Unity pointed out by the clear verses of the Qur'an, through the mystery of the legacy of prophethood? Can you explain it?
>
> "*The Answer:* It is a hundred times beyond the ability of an utterly powerless unfortunate like myself to judge these elevated stations with his limited thought. I shall just explain one or two extremely brief points proceeding from the effulgence of the All-Wise Qur'an. Perhaps they will be useful in understanding the matter...
>
> "There are numerous reasons for the way of the Unity of Existence, and for becoming enmeshed in it; one or two of them shall be described:
>
> "**The First Reason:** Because they could not squeeze into their brains the maximum degree of the creativity of dominicality, and could not entirely establish in their hearts that everything, through the mystery of Divine Oneness, is held directly in the grasp of dominicality and that all things have existence through Divine power, choice, and will, those who took that way were obliged to say that everything is either Him, or does not have existence, or is imaginary, or is His manifestation or emanation.

"**The Second Reason:** The mark of passionate love is to want never to be separated from the beloved and to flee desperately from such separation; to tremble at the thought of parting..."[111]

Second Piece: Part of the Second Important Matter in the Eighteenth Letter.

"*Question:* The Unity of Existence is considered by many people to be the most elevated station. But the way of the Unity of Existence in this form was not seen explicitly in the Companions and foremost the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs, who were at the level of 'the greatest sainthood,' or in the Imams of the Prophet's Family and foremost the five 'People of the Cloak,' or the great interpreters of the law and the generation following the Companions and foremost the founders of the four schools of law. So did those who emerged subsequently to them advance further than them? Did they find a better highway on which to proceed?

"*The Answer:* God forbid! Nobody at all has the ability to advance further than those purified ones who were the stars and heirs closest to the Sun of Prophethood; the highway is indeed theirs.

"As for the Unity of Existence, it is a way and a state, but it is a deficient degree. However, because it is illuminating and pleasurable, most of those who have reached that degree on their spiritual journeyings have not wanted to leave it; they have remained there and supposed it to be the ultimate degree.

"Thus, if one who takes this way is a spirit who is divested of materiality and intermediaries and has rent the veil of causes, and is immersed in a state of witnessing, then an experiential —not pertaining to knowledge— unity of existence which arises not from the Unity of Existence but from the Unity of Witnessing, may obtain for him a certain attainment, a spiritual station. He may even reach the degree of denying the universe for the sake of God. But if he is submerged in causes and preoccupied with materiality, the term Unity of Existence may go so far as meaning denying God on account of the universe."[112]

We said that Bediuzzaman dealt with the question from three angles; the two above pieces illustrate the first two. For the third, about the harm caused by the Unity of Existence at the present time, see the following:

"Teaching this question of the Unity of Existence to people at the present time causes serious harm. Just as when metaphors and similes pass from the hands of the learned to those of the common people and knowledge passes from scholars to the ignorant, they are thought to be literally true, so when elevated truths like the Unity of Existence pass to the heedless and to the common people submerged in causes, they are thought to be Nature, and cause three significant instances of harm..."[113]

Now a piece which demonstrates, together with the above three explanations, that the way of the Unity of Existence is a way of illumination that has emerged directly from Islam and the Qur'an, and that it has absolutely no connection with the false ways of the ancient philosophers, which were superstition and had entered Islam from outside:[114] [Not included here]

111. *Lem'alar* [Ott. ed.], 129 / *The Flashes Collection*, 65.
112. *Mektûbat*, 83 / *Letters*, 107.
113. *Lem'alar* [Ott. ed.], 691 / *The Flashes Collection*, 369-70.
114. *Âsâr-ı Bedi'iye*, 19.

A Comparison

A dispute about Muhyiddin al-'Arabi's way flared up in Egypt between Mustafa Sabri, the last Ottoman Shaykh al-Islam, and Musa Bekuf, who had made a name for himself in Egypt. Bediuzzaman was in Eskişehir Prison at the time, 1935. He was asked about their dispute, and he gave a reply:

"I do not have the time to weigh up the ideas of Mustafa Sabri and those of Musa Bekuf. I shall only say this much, that the one went to one extreme, and the other to the other extreme. Mustafa Sabri was right relatively to Musa Bekuf, but it is not right to denigrate someone like Muhyiddin who was a miracle of the Islamic sciences.

"Yes, himself, Muhyiddin was rightly-guided and acceptable, but in all his works cannot be the guide and instructor. Since he very often proceeded in the realities without balance, he opposed the rules of the Sunnis and some of the things he said apparently express misguidance. However, he himself is free of misguidance..."[115]

Conclusion

Bediuzzaman also provided a most original and important answer to Muhyiddin's views on the nature of spirit in the context of the Unity of Existence. Although he recognizes Muhyiddin's personal rank, wondrous knowledge, and his guidance, he analyzes and points out those of his writings that oppose the principles of the Sunnis. As follows:

"It is because of this that although he was such an elevated and wondrous spiritual pole, a unique one of ages, it is as though his particular way was very short and restricted to Sadruddin al-Qunawi, and that his works are only rarely benefited from by those on the straight path. Some of the authoritative scholars do not show any inclination to study those valuable works, and some of them even prevent it.

"Lengthy study and a very elevated and broad view is needed to show the fundamental differences together with their sources between the Hadhrat Muhyiddin's way and that of the exacting scholars. Yes, the differences are so fine and profound and the sources, so elevated and extensive that Hadhrat Muhyiddin has not been censured and has continued to be accepted. For if in regard to thought, scholarship, and illumination the difference and sources had become apparent, it would have been an extremely serious fall for him, and grievous error."[116]

Anyone interested in completing this subject may refer to the Second Matter of the Twenty-Sixth Letter, which explains why Muhyiddin al-'Arabi wrote to Fakhr al-Din al-Razi saying: "Knowing that God exists is not the same as knowing Him."

Thirty-Third Mystery: Religious *jihad*. Internal and external *jihad*. Political and social matters

Both formerly and now, at all times, both external *jihad* and internal *jihad* are incumbent on everyone. This is established by Qur'anic verses and Hadiths. However, it is written in the books of Islamic beliefs that "Muslims are forbid-

115. *Lem'alar* [Ott. ed.], 694 / *The Flashes Collection*, 371.
116. *Lem'alar* [Ott. ed.], 120 / *The Flashes Collection*, 59.

den to rebel against their oppressive and sinful leaders because of their tyranny and sinfulness, or to try to remove them from power. However, if the leader orders disbelief, and practises it and imposes it and tries to make it widespread, then it is unlawful to comply willingly." See for example, Imam Bajuri, *Sharḥ Jawhar al-Tawḥīd*, 464-7; *'Aqā'id al-Nasafī, bi-sharḥ al-Kastalī*, 185-6.

'External *jihad*' is incumbent on all Muslims in the event of an external enemy attacking the country and attempting to invade it. But if internally those in power attempt to impose on the Muslim people either forcibly or in underhand manner the laws and customs of the unbelievers, what form should internal *jihad* take against such a government? Since both in former times and in the present century numerous *mujahid* scholars had been unable to fix on a satisfactory course of action, both moderate and realistic, they opposed the revolts that erupted from time to time in various places in the Islamic world. In the great majority of instances such rebellions were unsuccessful and resulted in an intensification of oppression and the imposition of the systems of unbelief, and measures against pious Muslims were stepped up even more.

We ask Bediuzzaman about this question of internal *jihad*, and we analyze his attitude towards it from his youth to his death.

A) His life. Yes, almost every day of Ustad Bediuzzaman's life has been recorded and has been published. He never at any time joined any doubtful, bloody dissension or rebellions. In internal matters he always chose the way of gently offering guidance to any of those in power who had any religious belief, encouraging them to serve the people. And we see that he did this by means of the published word.

B) His writings, treatises, articles, and defence speeches. Much has been written in all Bediuzzaman's works about this matter. In his defence speeches in the courts of Eskişehir, Denizli, Afyon, Muş, the Military Court; in his articles which mention the volatile political situation and movements between 1908-10; in the Sixteenth Letter and its Addendum; the Thirteenth Letter; the Twelfth and Fourteenth Rays; the Twenty-Second Flash; and in particularly in his "Last Instruction" in *Emirdağ Lahikası* — in all these he described his way and his views on the question of internal *jihad*.

Now, some of the *mujahids* of the Islamic world have begun to assent to these ideas of Bediuzzaman on internal *jihad*, which are natural and in conformity with the circumstances of religion and the people. But formerly, considering oppression and sinfulness to be unbelief, some Islamic groups were involved in revolts and rebellions. Some of them, even, basing their views on a Qur'anic verse despite the consensus of all the Sunnis on the matter, considered not acting in accordance with the verse to be unbelief and justified their rebellion in that way. Numerous bloody and injurious situations occurred in the Islamic world as a result.

We quote parts of two or three of the above-mentioned works by way of example:

The First: Part of the Thirteenth Letter.

"Service of the Qur'an prevents me from thinking of socio-political life. It is like this: human life is a journey. I saw at this time through the light of the Qur'an that the way has entered a swamp. The caravan of mankind is stumbling forward in stinking and filthy mud. ... Thus there are two solutions for these:

"**The First:** to bring the drunken twenty per cent to their senses with a club.

"**The Second** to point out the safe way to the bewildered by showing them a light. ...

"And so, the swamp is the dissolute social life of mankind, which breeds heedlessness and misguidance. The drunkards are those obdurate people who take delight in misguidance, and the bewildered, those who detest misguidance, but cannot extract themselves from it. They want to bbe saved, but cannot find the way: they are confused. As for the clubs, they are the political currents. And the light, the truths of the Qur'an. Light cannot be disputed, nor can enmity be held towards it. No one can detest it apart from Satan the Accursed. And so, in order to hold in my hand the light of the Qur'an, I said, 'I seek refuge with God from Satan and from politics,' and throwing away the club of politics, embraced the light with both hands. I saw that in the political currents, there are lovers of those lights in both the opposition and the supporters. It is necessary that no side and no group casts aspersions on or holds back from the lights of the Qur'an which are shown, or from the teachings of the Qur'an, which are far superior to all political currents and partisanship and are exempt from and free of all their biased considerations. Unless they be the satans in human form or animals in human dress, who imagine irreligion and atheism to be politics and support them ...

"All praise be to God, because I withdrew from politics, I did not reduce the daimond-like truths of the Qur'an to the value of fragments of glass amid accusations of political propaganda. Indeed, the diamonds increase their value in the view of every group in brilliant fashion."[117]

The Second: Part of the Second Question of the Sixteenth Flash.

"The greatest danger facing the people of Islam at this time is their hearts being corrupted and belief harmed through the misguidance that arises from science and philosophy. The sole solution for this is light; it is to show light so that their hearts can be reformed and their belief, saved. If one acts with the club of politics and prevails over them, the unbelievers descend to the degree of dissemblers, and dissemblers are worse than unbelievers. That is to say, the club cannot heal the heart at this time, for then unbelief enters the heart and is concealed, and is transformed into dissembling. And at this time, a powerless person like myself cannot employ both of them—the club and the light. For this reason I am compelled to embrace the light with all my strength, and cannot consider the club of politics whatever form it is in. Whatever physical *jihad* demands, we are not charged with that duty at the moment. Yes, in accordance with a person's way, a club is necessary to form a barrier against the assaults of the unbelievers or apostates. But we only have two hands. Even if we had a hundred hands, they would be sufficient only for the light. We do not have any other hands with which to hold the club!"[118]

117. *Mektûbat*, 48 / *Letters*, 69-70.
118. *Lem'alar*, 105 / *The Flashes Collection*, 143-4.

The Third: Part of the last instruction Bediuzzaman gave his students before his death.

> "Therefore, saying they are the lesser of two evils, my Risale-i Nur brothers of the hereafter should not attack because of their mistakes certain unfortunates who are mistaken. They should always act positively. Acting negatively is not our concern. For action internally may not be negative. Since some of the politicians cause no harm to the Risale-i Nur and are a little tolerant, look on them as the lesser of two evils. So that you may be saved from greater evil, cause them no harm, but do them good.
>
> "Also, internal *jihad* of the word is to work against the moral and spiritual devastation. It is not material or physical service that is needed, but non-physical and moral. For this reason we do not interfere with politicians, nor have politicians any right to busy themselves with us!"[119]

If the pieces quoted at the beginning of these Thirty-Three Mysteries are taken into consideration, which are related to this question, and particularly the letter entitled "The Justice of Divine Determining" or "It is Only the Truth that Speaks," it will be better understood what Bediuzzaman's attitude to this matter was and his view of what form action should take. Also the pieces mentioned and quoted in the Nineteenth Mystery.

These thirty-three mysteries could have reached one hundred and fifty. It is possible to demonstrate that the mysteries of religion are solved in the Risale-i Nur. For example, one of the greatest of them, bodily resurrection, about which a brilliant genius like Imam Ghazzali said "it cannot be approached with the reason," is proved rationally, as is the the existence of the angels and jinns. The Ascension of the Prophet (PBUH), both in spirit and in body, is also proved. And the seven levels of the heavens and the seven levels of the earth are proved rationally and according to scholarly principles. Then too are the evidence and proofs of the continuation of the Qur'an, like a Sun in the universe, till the end of the world, with its forty aspects of miraculousness. And so on, it may be demonstrated that the Risale-i Nur has proved with complete clarity these and numerous other obscure matters and mysteries. But for now I consider these thirty-three to be sufficient as samples and indications of those very numerous and extensive mysteries. For papers should be brief and succinct in symposia like the present one. God willing, through His grace, He will produce luminous fruits from the papers presented by the learned scholars, from home and abroad, at this symposium. Amen!

* * *

119. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, ii, 245.

ISLAMIC UNITY AND POLITICAL THOUGHT

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and the Ideal of Islamic Unity

Hüseyin Çelik

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was a religious scholar who lived through the periods of Absolutism, the Second Constitution, and the Republic. In his work *Sünûhat*, he himself recounted that in a dream he was addressed in a gathering of Islamic personages of the past as: "O man of the age of disaster and perdition!"[1] In truth, the period through which Bediuzzaman lived was an age of "disaster and perdition," particularly for the Islamic world.

Andalusia, a star of Islam that shone on one side of Europe, had been completely extinguished by the 15th century; the Ottoman Empire, which had acted as the standard-bearer of Islam since the time it had been founded, had lost its dominance to the Christian West in the 17th century, while in the 19th century, it was heading towards its dismemberment. Firstly exciting feelings of nationalism among the non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire, the Europeans encouraged them to oppose the state. Then as a second stage, they promoted the pre-Islamic culture of the Muslim peoples, and distancing them from Islam, which they shared, led them to fight among themselves.

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1. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Sünûhat*, İstanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1977, 41.

When Bediuzzaman made his voice heard on the intellectual scene of the Ottomans, the today independent Muslim countries of Egypt, Pakistan, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, Brunei, the Maldives Republic, and Nigeria were under British occupation; while Algeria, Jibouti, Chad, Morocco, Gabon, Guinea, the Comoro Islands, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Tunisia were under French occupation; Indonesia was under joint Dutch and British occupation, Upper Volta under joint French and British, and after 1912, Libya under Italian occupation. Almost all as small khanates, the Turkish republics of today had been occupied and annexed by Russia, while the Muslim Turkish khanates of the Far-East had been swallowed up by China.

The conclusion to be drawn from the panorama we have traced is that with the exception of Iran, outside the lands under Ottoman rule, the whole of the Islamic world was under the rule of the infidel.

Although it had once been the hope of all Muslims world-wide, the Ottoman Empire had reached a state whereby it could no longer defend itself.

How full of meaning are the following lines by Yahya Kemal, written during the years of the War of Independence:

This whirlwind is the Turkish army, O Lord!
The army dying for You is this, O Lord!
So Your name may be strengthened with rising ezân's,
Give it victory, it is Your army, Islam's!

Even in its final stages, the Ottoman Empire continued to be the hope of the Islamic world. Like many Muslim intellectuals at the time, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was aware of this situation. In the defence he made in the military court following the 31st of March Incident, he mentioned the names of some of those he considered to be his predecessors in the question of Islamic Unity (*Ittiḥād-i Islām*). He said:

> "*In short:* I have paid allegiance to Sultan Selim. I have accepted his ideas about Islamic Unity, because he aroused the Eastern Provinces, and they paid allegiance to him. The people of the East today are the people of that time. My predecessors in this matter are Shaykh Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, the great scholar and Mufti of Egypt, Muhammad 'Abduh, the extremist scholar Ali Suavi, Hoja Tahsin, and Namık Kemal, who took Islamic Unity as his goal. It was Sultan Selim who said:
>
> *"Anxiety about dispute and division*
> *Will discomfort me, even in the corner of my grave;*
> *While unified, we have the means to repulse the enemy;*
> *While disunited, the people cause me grievous pain..."*[2]

Contrary to the general view, Muslim intellectuals were given no respite during Sultan Abdulhamid's reign, as has been well established by recent research. Like others, Bediuzzaman put forward his ideas about events in the Islamic world after the Proclamation of the Second Constitution. He considered as his forerunners in the question of Islamic Unity, Ali Suavi and Namık Kemal, who were not looked on at all favourably during Sultan 'Abdulhamid's reign, Hoja

2. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Divan-ı Harb-i Örfî*, İstanbul 1983, 29.

Tahsin Efendi, whom some circles even deemed to be a materialist, and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad 'Abduh, whom some *'ulama* had even declared to be unbelievers. Although their ideas on various subjects may be thought to be extreme in one way or the other, they had embraced the ideal of Islamic Unity wholeheartedly.

Ali Suavi was presented to the young generations of the Republic as a "Turkist", yet he wrote in the newspaper, *Muhbir*: "I proclaim my pride in being part of a community the aim of which is to unite all the two hundred million Muslims in the world."[3]

The reply Ali Suavi wrote in the *Muhbir* newspaper to a claim made in the Saturday Review, published in London, that because few Turks were members of the Kayı tribe, which came to Anatolia together with Ertuğrul Ghazi, there were only very few Turks in Anatolia, also showed in the clearest fashion that he supported Islamic Unity:

> "The Turkish state emerged, but it gave no credit to the idea of race, and employed those fit for office of any extraction.
>
> "Yes, in the East the idea of *Tawḥīd* (Divine Unity) takes the place of the idea of race. That is to say, it is not Turkism that is dominant, but Islam. Whereas in Europe, it is not religion, but racialism that rules. The difference between the East and West is this. The books and newspapers of Europe should not busy themselves with discussing things like 'There are no Turks left,' for in the East there is no Turkist cause. So which is the more enduring, the racialist cause of Europe, or the East's Islamic cause?
>
> "On judging this case, certainly the East's position is better, because, for instance, with its French cause, France is only thirty million. However, with its cause of Islam, the Turks are two hundred million. A race may perish, Islam will never perish."[4]

In an article entitled *İmtizac-ı Akvâm* (The Mixing of Peoples), Namık Kemal considered the matter, not only from the point of view of its embracing the whole Islamic world, but of its embracing all Ottoman subjects. In order to explain what a dead-end the racialist approach was, he wrote: "So long as the genealogies of mankind are not copied out from the Preserved Tablet, who in this world can know correctly who comes from where in the distribution of races?"[5]

While in an article entitled Islamic Unity (*Ittihad-ı Islam*), Namık Kemal expressed the absolute necessity of achieving Islamic Unity. He then continued: "But since the aim is Islamic Unity, it naturally cannot be restricted to the frontiers of the Ottoman Empire, and the perpetuation and acceptance of such a broad and general desire can be obtained in my humble opinion only by complete avoidance of the claims of politics and various schools of law (*mezheb*)." He sees division as one of the chief reasons for the Islamic world's backwardness: "One of the gravest situations preventing all the people of Islam from

3. *Muhbir*, London, 31 Ağustos 1867, 2.
4. *Muhbir*, London, 12 Haziran 1868, 2.

perpetuating the high degree of civilization they possessed at one time, were the divisions that occurred between them."[6]

Hoja Tahsin Efendi was known for his close relations with Ali Suavi in the years he was in Paris. Although he never joined the Young Ottoman's Society, he was in direct contact with its members. His student, the poet Abdülhak Hamid, who knew him well, refuted with the following lines in the elegy he wrote on his death, the claim that he was a materialist:

"He was a perpetual recaller of God (Hakk)
Though the ignorant supposed he was a denier of God."[7]

It has now been established by research that the ideal of Islamic Unity began with the Young Ottomans.[8] In any case, the support of Muhammad 'Abduh and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani for Islamic Unity is well-known. So it is understood from the above figures, who are some of those Bediuzzaman considered to be his predecessors in this matter, that he was not making a haphazard choice. Almost all the names he mentioned were controversial figures in the Islamic world, either because of their activities, or because of their ideas. Bediuzzaman anyway accepted them as his predecessors, not entirely, but in the question of Islamic Unity. We should note this point in particular.

In one of his writings, Eşref Edip describes Bediuzzaman's close relations with supporters of Islamic Unity after the Second Constitutional Revolution in this way:

> "More than forty years have passed since I first knew Ustad. At that time, he used to come to the office [the offices of the journal *Sirat-ı Müstakim*], and we would have most pleasant conversations together with the Akif's, Naim's, Ferid's, and İzmirli's. With the inflection particular to him, Ustad would speak of elevated scholarly matters, and we would be fired by the boldness and courage of his speech."[9]

Those referred to here are Mehmet Akif, Babanzâde Ahmed Na'im Efendi, Ferid Kam, and İsmail Hakkı İzmirli. These were Islamic writers well-known both in their own time, and today. And it is understood from what Eşref Edip wrote that they were influenced considerably by Bediuzzaman.

After the Second Constitutional Revolution, many formulas were put forward to halt the decline and dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. The best known of these were Ottomanism, Islamic Unity, and Turkism. Ottomanism had been the official ideology of the Tanzimat period, but it survived only briefly in the Second Constitutional Period. The ideals most widespread among intellectuals of that time were Islamic Unity and Turkism. Turkism at the same time was contained within the idea of Westernization.

6. *İbret*, 21 Rebiülahir 1289 (1872) No: 1.
7. Enginün, İnci, (Comp.) *Hep Yahut Hiç*, İstanbul, Dergah Yayınları 1982, 50.
8. Türköne, Mümtazer, *Siyasî İdeoloji Olarak İslâmcılığın Doğuşu*, İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları 1992.
9. *Risale-i Nur Külliyatı Müellifi, Bediüzzaman Said Nursî, Hayatı, Mesleki, Tercüme-i Hâli*, İstanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1970, 551.

As we stated above, the Europeans first incited the non-Muslim Ottoman subjects to rebel against the state, then they chose the way of causing division among the Muslim subjects. By highly colouring and idealizing in particular the pre-Islamic life of the Arabs, Turks, Albanians, and Kurds etc., the chief aim of the European orientalists was to make them lose their love for Islam, which they held in common, and so to destroy Islamic Unity. It was at this point that Bediuzzaman's struggle for Islamic Unity began. He believed that Islamic brotherhood was the means of saving the Islamic world, a large part of which was under occupation, and of perpetuating the Ottoman Empire as the hope of the Islamic world, saving it from dismemberment. For Bediuzzaman, more than being a means of serving political ends, this belief was primarily a Divine command and wish.

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi described his views on nationalism, Islamic Unity, and every sort of division most comprehensively in his work *Mektûbat* (Letters). He said that he had written one matter, the Third Topic of the Twenty-Sixth Letter, "in the tongue of the Old Said, who was involved in the social life of Islam."

Expounding the verse "*O mankind! We created you from a single [pair] of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other*," (49:13) Bediuzzaman likens the Islamic world being separated into nations and tribes to an army being separated into ranks. In the same way that an army is separated into ranks in order to serve better the common aim of those who comprise it, in his words: "I created you as peoples, nations, and tribes, so that you should know one another and the relations between you in social life, and assist one another; not so that you should regard each other as strangers, refusing to acknowledge one another, and nurturing hostility and enmity."[10]

Bediuzzaman describes the point nationalism becomes racialism as follows:

> "The idea of nationalism has greatly advanced this century. The cunning European tyrants in particular awaken this among Muslims in negative fashion, so that they may divide them and devour them."[11]

Mehmet Akif shared these views with Bediuzzaman. The following lines by him, which call on Muslims to unite, are nothing other than the versified expression of the above words:

"'Civilization' has long since been baring its teeth at you;
It wants first to break you up, then to devour you!"[12]

Bediuzzaman used the words 'nation' (*millet*) and 'nationhood' (*milliyet*) in accordance with their Arabic meanings —as is well-known, the word '*millet*' was originally used to denote a religion and membership of it; today, the word '*Umma*' is used in its place— and divides 'nationalism' (*milliyetçilik*) into two: "positive nationalism" means the nationalism which includes the Islamic nation

10. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Mektûbat*, Germany, Yeni Asya Neşriyat 1993, 309-10 / *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi—Letters 1928-1932* [English trans: Şükran Vahide] İstanbul, Sözler Publications 1994, 379.
11. *Mektûbat*, 310 / *Letters*, 380.
12. Ersoy, Mehmet Akif, *Safahat*, Ankara, Diyanet İşleri Bakanlığı Yayınları 1992, 172.

(*millet*), while "negative nationalism" considers a particular race to be superior, or gives priority to race over religion.

Bediuzzaman asks: "What race is there that has three hundred and fifty million members? And which racialism can gain for those who subscribe to it so many brothers —and eternal brothers— in place of Islam?",[13] and lists the harm racialism has caused throughout history, even in the history of Islam. He then calls on the Muslims suffering under the yoke of Europe to unite.

In his view, to nuture enmity towards co-religionists in the eastern provinces (the Kurds), or towards the south (the Arabs), would cause disaster: "What comes from the south is the light of the Qur'an; the light of Islam came from there; it is present among us, and is found everywhere. So to be hostile towards those fellow Muslims is indirectly harmful to Islam and the Qur'an." He is stating here that nationhood (*milliyet*) should be the armour and citadel for Islam, and should not take its place.

Bediuzzaman calls out to the Turkish nation, saying:

> "O sons of this land, who are the people of the Qur'an! Challenging the whole world, you have proclaimed the Qur'an as its standard-bearers, not for six hundred years, but for a thousand years since the time of the 'Abbasids. You have made your nationhood the citadel to the Qur'an and Islam. You have silenced the whole world and repulsed awesome attacks..."[14]

In his work, *Sünûhat*, he depicts the Arabs, who rebelled against the Ottomans due to the incitement and stratagems of the British, like this: "See the Arab: he killed his heroic brother in error, and in his bewilderment does not even know how to weep," and describes the fighting of the Muslims who were under European rule against the Ottomans and the rebelling of the non-Turkish Ottoman subjects as: "See, in its heedlessness the Islamic world unknowingly assisted in the killing of its standard-bearer son, and now is wailing and tearing its hair like a mother [who has lost her child]."[15] In truth, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which as an independent state was the last hope of the Islamic world, saddened Bediuzzaman to the utmost degree. He describes in his work *Lem'alar*, on his climbing the citadel in Ankara when invited there by Ataturk in 1922, how the onset of his own old age, the season of autumn, the age of the citadel, and the aging of the Ottoman Empire, which had not yet then died, all caused him to experience "an utterly black state of mind."[16]

Bediuzzaman uttered serious warnings particularly to the Turks, not to get carried away on the idea of racialism:

> "O my Turkish brother! You watch out in particular! Your nationhood has fused with Islam and may not be separated from it. If you do separate them, you will be finished! All your glorious deeds of the past are recorded in the book of Islam's deeds. Since these glorious deeds cannot be effaced from the face of the earth by any power, don't you efface them from your heart due to the evil suggestions and devices of Satan!"[17]

13. *Mektûbat*, 310 / *Letters*, 380.
14. *Mektûbat*, 311-12 / *Letters*, 382.
15. *Sünûhat*, 54.
16. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Lem'alar*, İstanbul, Yeni Asya Yayınları 1994, 229 / *The Flashes Collection* [English trans.] Sözler Publications 1995, 293.

Bediuzzaman described the Umayyads basing the Islamic state on Arab nationalism as puting the bonds of nationalism before those of Islam, and expressed the untold harm this caused in the Islamic world as "they offended the other nations and frightened them off." A racialist government cannot be just and is bound to be tryannical, and a ruler of racialist leanings prefers those of the same race and cannot act justly. The bonds of nationalism may not therefore be set up in place of the bonds of religion. And he explains this giving evidence from Hadiths.[18]

Bediuzzaman gives a stern answer to those who want to smear Islamic nationhood with racialism:

> "O you drunken pseudo-patriots! Perhaps the previous century could have been the age of nationalism. This century is not the age of racialism! Communism and socialism pervade everything, destroying the idea of racialism. The age of racialism is passing. Eternal and permanent Islamic nationhood cannot be bound to temporary unstable racialism and grafted onto it. Even if it was to be, just as it would corrupt the Islamic nation, so it would not reform racialist nationalism. Yes, there appears to be a pleasure and temporary strength in a temporary graft, but it is very temporary and the consequences are dangerous."[19]

At every opportunity Bediuzzaman set out in his works the harmfulness of racialism, in accordance with what he had learnt from the Holy Qur'an and Hadiths and the lessons of history. Just as people cannot appoint their own parents, so they cannot chose to which race they belong. Doubtless, moving on from this point, Bediuzzaman considered to be futile anyone being either arrogant or regretful due to their race. In addition, he stated that in the Ottoman lands in particular, the races had quite simply been melted one within the other, and that it would only be possible to truly determine who belonged to which race on the Preserved Tablet being revealed. We may read this from his own words:

> "To those who exceed the bounds in ideas of negative nationalism and racialism we say this: Firstly, the face of the world and especially this country of ours has since ancient times seen numerous migrations and changes of population. In addition, after the centre of Islamic rule was set up in this country, other peoples were drawn to it and settled here. As a consequence, only when the Preserved Tablet is revealed will the races truly be distinguished from each other. In which case, to construct movements and patriotism on the idea of true race is both meaningless and extremely harmful."[20]

Bediuzzaman considered that if language, religion, and country were the same, it meant there was a powerful nation. A society based on the unity of religion and country was also included within the bounds of nationalism.[21] In the

17. *Mektûbat*, 312 / *Letters*, 382.
18. *Mektûbat*, 58 / *Letters*, 75-6.
19. *Mektûbat*, 424 / *Letters*, 513.
20. *Mektûbat*, 313-4 / *Letters*, 384.
21. *Mektûbat*, 314 / *Letters*, 384.

same way, his last words in a discussion he wrote on the idea of 'decentralization,' put forward by Prince Sabahaddin Bey, were: "If we have to have 'nationalism' [here, *'unşur*—Tr.], Islam is enough for us."[22]

Bediuzzaman considered Islamic Unity to be necessary for the happiness both of this world and of the next. Nationalism and self-interest had been sufficient incentives for the Europeans' progress, but for the Muslims, the greater part of whom were under captivity, and those who were free were the object of similar designs, there was no way of salvation apart from unity. Bediuzzaman expressed this as follows:

> "We are truly intensely in need of this unity for the happiness of this world and the next, for we have no nationality other than Islam."[23]

When expounding the secret of the Europeans' progress, he speaks of the Christians supporting one another, that is, one being the point of support of the other:

> "Yes, if any Christian raises his head and seizes on one of the goals, which carry on in continuous succession and are one within the other, he looks behind him and sees a most powerful point of support on which to rely, from which he can always seek support for his morale and give it life. He finds the strength in himself to contend in the face of even the greatest and most burdensome matters.
>
> "His point of support is European civilization, which is a barracks of the armed masses or a great church, which, with its civilized inquisition-bigotry kneaded together with the irreligion of the materialists and its drunken pride at the domination of its civilization, is cunning and ever-ready to strengthen the life-giving veins of its co-religionists, who stretch out their hands to it from all directions, and to cut the most vital veins of the Muslims."[24]

Unlike some people, Bediuzzaman does not show the Europeans to be the cause of the disasters visited on the Islamic world, and to exonerate the people of the East of all responsibility. On the contrary, he believes those disasters to be retribution for past acts. He says that by being neglectful of their religion and falling into conflict, the Muslims issued a '*fatwa*' to Divine Determining to appoint calamities, and they had fallen into abasement and poverty in punishment for their error.[25] However, according to Bediuzzaman, "What will save us, is again [Islam's] mercy."[26]

In my opinion, the greatest problem for today's Muslims too, is their continually holding others responsible for the disasters they suffer, while exonerating themselves. In my view, the West only acts in the way that being western necessitates. Is the Islamic world not responsible for having given them the opportunity to colonize it and divide it? Does one who leaves his sheep untended have the right to complain when the wolves eat them? When we enter God's presence, will it be enough to win His forgiveness if we say that we committed sins

22. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *İçtimai Reçeteler*, İstanbul, Tenvir Neşriyat 1990, ii, 255.
23. *İçtimai Reçeteler*, ii, 278.
24. *Sünûhat*, 59.
25. *Sünûhat*, 47.
26. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Muhâkemat*, İstanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1986, 7.

because Satan misled us? Satan does only what is necessitated by being Satan; God will give him his punishment too. So what about those that follow him, and those that provide the opportunity for him to mislead Muslims...?

As a scholar who had thoroughly grasped this fine point, Bediuzzaman was doing what they call 'self-criticism,' in reference to the whole Islamic world. In *Sünûhat*, he says that because the Muslims did not take advantage of the Hajj previously to the First World War and profit from the elevated Islamic politics which is part of it, and did not perform it with a union of hearts, they were visited not by disaster, but by Divine wrath and retribution: "Instead of enthusiastically making the journey of the Hajj, which is pure good, millions of the people of Islam were made to make lengthy journeys throughout the world under the enemy flag, which is pure evil."[27]

At the start of the century, Bediuzzaman pointed out that ignorance, poverty, and conflict were the three basic enemies, and he wanted war to be declared on them with the weapons of industry, learning, and unity.[28] The conflict here is the conflict between Muslims. He said that just like personal egotism, nationalities too should be melted and dissolved in the great pool of the waters of Islam. He was drawing attention to the aggressive side of racialism:

"The mark of racialism is aggression, since it is nourished by devouring others."[29] He says that the bond between people in Western civilization is one of race, and this has led to disastrous wars for mankind. He suggests that the Second World War occurred because of racialism,[30] and states that Qur'anic civilization has as its basis the unity of religion and country in place of the bond of race, and that as a result of this, feelings of cordial brotherhood between people have developed, and of confidence, and defence against outside aggression.[31]

Bediuzzaman and many others who thought similarly pursued their battle against racialism throughout the Constitutional Period and even in the Armistice years and the years of the War of Independence. But they were not successful at holding together even the Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire. Journals published with the support of the Committee of Union and Progress contained lively discussions of Turkism, after similar discussions on Arab, Albanian, and Kurdish nationalism. Europeans brought to the fore pre-Islamic Turkism, and the French writer Leon Cahun in particular romanticized and even idealized life in Central Asia, and presented it to the Turkish youth. On the other hand, especially the British presented to the Arabs the Arab culture of the age of ignorance (*jāhiliyya*) as though it was a new discovery. The Muslim peoples returning to their pre-Islamic cultures automatically reduced Islam, which ensured the unity of their hearts and ideals, to the level of being merely an element of culture.

After the founding of the Republic, those who set up the state made Turkism

27. *Sünûhat*, 54.
28. *Divan-ı Harb-i Örfî*, 23.
29. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Sözler*, İstanbul, Yeni Asya Yayınları 1994, 372 / *The Words*, 420.
30. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Kastamonu Lahikası*.
31. *Sünûhat*, 46.

its official ideology. The age of the *Umma* was closed, and since the day Turkey was turned into a nation-state, Turkism is what has been reiterated. Most dangerous of all, Islam was just about pushed outside of life altogether. Before the Republic had been established and the War of Independence was continuing, Bediuzzaman went to Ankara at the invitation of Ataturk. He had supported the National Forces from the outset, opposing the British occupation of Istanbul with his work *Hutûvât-ı Sitte* (The Seven Steps). He realized the situation in Ankara and found the indifference of some of the deputies to be dangerous. His vision since his early years had been to found a university similar to al-Azhar in Cairo, in Van, which he called the Medresetü'z-Zehrâ. He had gone to Sultan Abdulhamid and told him of the situation in the East and the widespread ignorance there. He determined to get support for the university he envisaged, but was prevented by the Chamberlain, and being accused of madness was sent to a lunatic asylum. He finally got Sultan Reşad to accept his project, and laid the foundations at Edremit, which today is a district of Van. According to his plan, the modern sciences would be taught together with the religious sciences in this university, and in this way both bigotry, and doubts and scepticism arising from science and philosophy, would be removed. Bediuzzaman also sought a Medresetü'z-Zehrâ for each of the provinces of Diyarbakır and Bitlis, and said the following concerning the languages and syllabus of these institutions:

> "The modern sciences and sciences of the medreses will be combined, and Arabic will be compulsory, Kurdish permissible, and Turkish necessary."[32]

Bediuzzaman believed that the Medresetü'z-Zehrâ would be one of the most effective barriers against racialism,[33] and on being unable to bring it to fruition due to the First World War, then brought it before the National Assembly. He received support from 163 deputies out of 200, including Ataturk, but this time the closing of the *medreses* (religious schools) made this attempt fruitless too.

In a letter he sent to Celâl Bayar and Adnan Menderes explaining the harm of racialism and benefits of Islamic brotherhood, Bediuzzaman described as follows the awakening in him of the idea of the Medresetü'z-Zehrâ:

> "Sixty-five years ago I wanted to go to the University of al-Azhar. I said to myself, it is the *medrese* of the Islamic world; and I intended to study in that blessed *medrese*. But it was not to be. However, in his mercy, God inspired my spirit with an idea: just as the Unversity of al-Azhar is a universal *medrese* in Africa, however larger Asia is than Africa, so too a larger place of learning, an Islamic University, was necessary in Asia. Then racialism would not corrupt the Muslim peoples, for example, the nations of Arabia, India, Iran, Caucasia, Turkestan, and Kurdistan. And through Islamic nationhood, which is real, positive, sacred, and universal, true nationhood, it would manifest the total unfolding of a 'fundamental law' of the Qur'an: *Verily, the believers are brothers*. And it would reconcile the sciences of philosophy and those of religion, and make peace between European civilization and the truths of Islam."[34]

32. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Münâzarat*, 127.
33. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Emirdağ Lahikası*, İstanbul, Sinan Matbaası 1959, ii, 196.
34. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, ii, 195-6.

On expressing these views during the first Assembly, some of the deputies told Bediuzzaman that the need now was for Westernization and civilization rather than the religious and traditional sciences. In his reply to them, he put forward principles that hold a light to the basic troubles of the present day, and should have been taken into consideration when founding the Republic. Addressing the deputies, he said:

> "Even, to suppose the impossible, there was absolutely no need, the fact that the majority of prophets have appeared in Asia and the East, and most of the philosophers have emerged in the West indicates that what will cause the true progress of Asia is the sense of religion, rather than the effects of science and philosophy. Since this is the case, if, disregarding this natural law, you leave aside Islamic tradition in the name of Westernization and even if you make secularism a principle, for the well-being of the nation and country, it is absolutely essential for you to give certain support to religion and the truths of Islam in the Eastern Provinces, which are at the centre of four or five large nations. I shall give you a small example out of thousands:
>
> "While in Van, I asked a patriotic student of mine: 'The Turks have performed great services for Islam. How do you regard them?' He replied: 'I prefer a Muslim Turk to a depraved[Kurdish] brother. In fact, I am closer to him than to my own father. For the Turks serve the cause of belief wholeheartedly.' Some time passed, may God have mercy on him, and while I was being held as a prisoner-of-war, he was enrolled in a school in Istanbul. I saw him when I returned. Due to being affected by the reactions of some racialist teachers, and because a propensity towards Kurdish nationalism, he had embarked on a different way. He told me: 'I now prefer a Kurd, even if he is depraved or even without religion, to an upright Turk.' I later saved him after speaking with him on a few occasions. He formed the certain opinion that the Turks are the heroic army of this nation of Islam.
>
> "O deputies who asked the question! In the East are nearly five million Kurds, and nearly a hundred million Iranians and Indians. There are seventy million Arabs. There are forty million Caucasians. I wonder, is the religious instruction that student received in the medrese in Van more necessary for these brothers, who are all neighbours and brothers and in need of each other, or was that late student's second condition better, which [resulted from] disregarding the Islamic sciences and studying only the philosophical [modern] sciences—which cast those nations into confusion and think of no one but people of their own race, and do not recognize Islamic brotherhood? I ask you!"[35]

Like many architects of the national struggle, material and spiritual, Bediuzzaman was not reconciled with the new regime after the founding of the Republic. He withdrew into seclusion in Van. He did not join the Shaykh Said revolt, and so too, he prevented many other influential people from joining the movement, which led to brother spilling the blood of brother. He was nevertheless taken from Van and sent into exile in Burdur. He then dedicated himself to the struggle for belief and the Qur'an that would continue till the end of his days. Bediuzzaman called this period that of the 'New Said,' and in writing and disseminating his work called the Risale-i Nur received the greatest support from his students

35. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, ii, 196-7.

of western Anatolia, who were Turks. In order to make his students look coldly on him, those apprehensive at this struggle of Bediuzzaman said at every opportunity that it was not right for a Turk to follow a Kurdish *hoja*. Previously, Bediuzzaman had always stressed the brotherhood of Kurd and Turk, saying: "The Turks are our minds and we are their strength."[36] He had insisted that Kurd and Turk should unite,[37] that the life of Kurdish society was bound to the life and happiness of the Turks,[38] and in the Republican period too, insisted on Islamic brotherhood and condemned racialism.

> "In order to deceive my brothers and excite their nationalist feelings, certain irreligious people who occupy high places and attack me by means of propaganda, through the promptings of Satan and suggestions of the people of misguidance, say: 'You are Turks. Thanks be to God, among the Turks are religious scholars and people of perfection of every sort. Said is a Kurd. To work along with someone who does not share your nationality is unpatriotic.'
>
> "*The Answer:* You miserable person without religion! All praise be to God, I am a Muslim. At all times there are three hundred and fifty million members of my sacred nation. I seek refuge with God a hundred thousand times over from sacrificing three hundred and fifty million brothers who establish an eternal brotherhood, and who help me with their prayers and among whom are the vast majority of Kurds, for the idea of racialism and negative nationalism, and from gaining in place of those innumerable blessed brothers a few who have embarked on a way which is without religion or belongs to no school of law, who bear the name of Kurd and are reckoned to belong to the Kurdish people. O you without religion! There would have to have been some idiots like you who would abandon the everlasting brotherhood of a luminous beneficial community of three hundred and fifty million true brothers in order to gain the brotherhood —which even in this world is without benefit— of a handful of Hungarian infidels or Europeanized Turks who have lost their religion. Since, in the Third Matter of the Twenty-Sixth Letter, we have shown, together with the evidences, the nature of negative nationalism and its harms, we refer you to that, and here will only explain a truth which was mentioned briefly at the end of the Third Matter. It is as follows:
>
> "I say to those pseudo-patriotic irreligious deviants who hide beneath the veil of Turkism and in reality are enemies of the Turks: 'I am closely and most truly connected by means of an eternal and true brotherhood with the nation of Islam, with the believers of this country who are called Turks. And on account of Islam, I have a proud and partial love for the sons of this land who for close on a thousand years victoriously carried the banner of the Qur'an to every corner of the world. As for you, you pseudo-patriotic imposters! You possess in a way that will make you forget the true national pride of the Turks, a metaphorical, racial, temporary, and hateful brotherhood.'"[39]

It is apparent that in identifying with the source of pride and qualities of the Turkish nation, which are on account of Islam and make the Turkish nation what it is, he is considering both himself and all Muslims to be their natural heirs. He

36. *İçtimai Reçeteler*, ii, 264.
37. *İçtimai Reçeteler*, ii, 126.
38. *Münâzarat*, 126.
39. *Mektûbat*, 407-8 / *Letters*, 492.

believes that the Turkism that became the state ideology after the founding of the Republic and was just about entirely stripped of religion, was an injustice to the Turkish nation. He could not forgive those who had rejected all the Ottoman, Seljuq and other Muslim states and the civilization they had founded, and sought the roots of the Turkish nation in the ancient civilizations of Anatolia or in pre-Islamic Turkism, admirers of Jenghiz Khan and Hulagu.[40] One of the reasons for his opposing the Turkifying of the *ezân* (call to prayer), was his observation that it would cause division. He said that above all the translating of the Holy Qur'an into Turkish stemmed from antipathy towards Arabic, the language of Islam, and was the result of racialist attitudes.[41]

Basically, those who bring up the subject of Bediuzzaman being a Kurd are those opposed to his struggle for belief and Islam. If to suppose the impossible Bediuzzaman had supported Turkism, they would never mention his being a Kurd. Moreover, although most of the first, and the most famous, of those who put forward the idea of Turkism were not ethnic Turks, this was never mentioned as a problem. Among the first Turkists were Mahmud Celaleddin Paşa, a Pole; Ahmed Vefik Paşa, the grandson of a Jewish convert to Islam; Şemseddin Sami, an Albanian; Ömer Seyfeddin, a Caucasian; and Ziya Gökalp, a Kurd.[42]

In a letter Bediuzzaman wrote while in Barla, Bediuzzaman stresses that he has no problem with things like race, his measure is closeness to God. From the tone of the letter, it is understood that he was very discomforted by simplistic statements like "Said is a Kurd, he should not be followed." He explains his position as follows:

> "Yes, I came into the world in a different country [eastern Turkey], but God has made me serve the sons of this region [western Turkey]. For it is well-known by the people around here that for nine years I have worked ceaselessly for the happiness of nine out of ten of the people (*millet*) in this region in their own language.
>
> "Also, by the works [I have produced] this ten years and the services [I have performed], I have demonstrated that I prefer the twenty to thirty Muslim Turkish youths here like Hulûsi, Sabri, Hafız Ali, Husrev, Re'fet, Asım, Mustafa Çavuş, Süleyman, Lütfü, Rüştü, Mustafa, Zekai, and Abdullah, to twenty or thirty thousand of my fellow-countrymen, and I accept them in their place. Yes, I could not compare a thousand heedless and common Kurds with Hulûsi, who is a Turk; and I could not consider a thousand ignorant Kurds to be equal to Asım and Re'fet, who are Turks; and I would not swap young Husrev with a thousand common Kurds. Those who know me confirm this. So those who attack me in the name of Westernizing and on account of irreligion, under the veil of Turkism, in the form of false patriotism and in their conceit, those atheists who are poisoning the Turkish nation and nationhood, should know that thousands of Turks are witness that I have served the Turkish nation, which is one of the greatest *mujahid* armies of Islam, as much as a thousand Turks. So those fraudulent pseudo-patriots who accusingly call me a Kurd should show how I have served this nation."[43]

40. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Barla Lahikası*, İstanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1987, 197.
41. *Mektûbat*, 420 / *Letters*, 507-8.
42. Türköne, Mümtazer, "*Milli Devlet, Laiklik, Demokrasi*" Türkiye Günlüğü No: 29, Temmuz-Ağustos 1994, 29.
43. *Barla Lahikası*, 150.

Because in his early life Bediuzzaman used the name Kurdi, which was in order to summon the Muslim Kurds to unity in the Second Constitutional Period, and because he said some things to draw attention to their virtues or to flatter their national pride, he was on occasion called a Kurdish nationalist. It is also a known fact that in that period he had connections with a Kurdish society the members of which might very possibly have taken the wrong road. But these certainly do not necessitate the unfairness of calling him "a Kurdish nationalist."

Bediuzzaman used the name Kurdi, referring to Kurdistan as a geographical area on the Ottoman map, and in the Republican period gave up the name, taking that of his native village so as not to allow it to be exploited for racialist purposes. Nevertheless, certain people insist on using the name when referring to him.

It was not only the Kurds, he on occasion said things to flatter the national pride of the Arabs and Turks. The purpose of this was to redirect the heroism and self-sacrifice they possessed or their forefathers had displayed into Islamic channels. From beginning to end, his work *Hutbe-i Şâmiye* is full of praise for the Arabs' positive qualities. We have anyway seen what he said about the Turks in the quotes above. So with the same logic, it is possible to call him "a Turkish nationalist" or "an Arab nationalist." But to do so is to misunderstand him.

To come to his connection with a Kurdish society; he had at that time relations not only with Kurdish societies, but with the Committee of Union and Progress. He was also one of the founders of the *İttihad-ı Muhammedî Cemiyeti* (Society for Muslim Unity). After the proclamation of the Constitution it was he who gave the first address in Salonica. In his work, *Divan-ı Harb-i Örfî* (The Military Court), he recounts how, in the Second Constitutional Period with all its instability and uncertainty, he directed many unavoidable events into positive channels. Then for years it was said that the society among whose founders he was, was the *Kürt Teali Cemiyeti* (Society for the Advancement of Kurdistan), however in fact it was the *Kürdistan Neşr-i Ma'arif Cemiyeti* (Society for the Propagation of Education among Kurds).[44] We have in any case described above his efforts to deliver the Eastern Provinces from ignorance. Anyway at that time such a society was not considered unusual in any way. It was a society whose aim was to save eastern Turkey from ignorance.

After the establishment of the Republic, Bediuzzaman on the one hand endeavoured to save Islamic brotherhood in Turkey, despite all the moves to destroy it, and on the other, found even the tiniest move towards the unity of Turkey with the Muslim Arab world and other Islamic countries a source of joy. He particularly congratulated and supported Menderes in connection with the efforts of the Democrat Party in this direction. Bediuzzaman called Menderes "a hero of Islam" because of his sympathy towards the Islamic religion and world,[45] and wrote a letter to him and Celâl Bayar on the occasion of the Turkey's treaty of co-operation with Pakistan and Iraq, that is, on the setting up of the Baghdad Pact, informing them that he applauded their efforts.[46]

44. Tunaya, Tarık Zafer, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler*, İstanbul 1986, ii, 214-5.
45. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, ii, 142.
46. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, ii, 194.

Bediuzzaman considered many Islamic countries gaining their independence after the Second World War each to be steps towards future Islamic Unity. He expressed his great joy at these developments in a letter he wrote his students.[47]

As we stated above, at the beginning of this century, Bediuzzaman diagnosed the sicknesses as ignorance, poverty, and discord. Today in eastern and south-eastern Turkey the matter is basically the same. Those seeking to cause division profit from the people's ignorance and the backwardness of the region. Moving on from these points, they excite their feelings of racialism. The solution for the problems of eastern Turkey lies in Islamic brotherhood. But unfortunately, it has been long delayed. If when the Republic was being founded, the official quarters had listened to Bediuzzaman, there is no doubt that today's situation would not have arisen. The proverb, one reaps what one sows, describes the situation perfectly. To expect that the people of eastern Turkey who have been brought up without religion will not be Kurdish nationalists, and their counterparts in western Turkey will not be Turkish nationalists, is to be optimistic in the extreme.

I am of the opinion that in order to establish brotherhood in this country, for its peace and security, and for Turkey to reach the position, material and spiritual, where it may lead the Islamic world as it did in the past, it is necessary to turn to Bediuzzaman today and to give consideration to his diagnoses of the problems and the remedies he put forward.

* * *

47. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, ii, 100.

Islamic Unity in the Light of The Damascus Sermon

'Abd al-Wadud Shalabi

The main points this paper comprises

1. An historical approach to the obstacles before Islamic unity (*al-vaḥdat al-Islāmiyya*) as put forward in the ideas of the great scholars Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani.

2. How, according to the British records and the book *Ḥāḍir al-'Ālam al-Islāmī,* the planned measures against the Islamic Caliphate in the last century were first put into practice.

3. The breaking up of the Caliphate State and the Arab world after the First World War.

4. The Indian Muslims, who rebelled against imperialism and defended the Caliphate State. A look at Mawlana Muhammad 'Ali Karachi's trial.

5. Bediuzzaman's views on nationalistic conflict in the light of a conversation with Hüseyin Pasha.

6. A view of Algeria on its independence.

Prof. Dr. 'ABD AL-WADŪD SHALABĪ
Professor Shalabi studied first in al-Azhar University, then did post-graduate work in Cambridge, and the Oriental and Punjab Universities. He played an active role in liberating Egypt from British occupation. He was arrested and ill-treated by the British, and during the years he served in the ranks of the *Ikhwan al-Muslimin* was among those who suffered under the tyranny of Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir. Professor Shalabi has undertaken important duties in Egypt and other Muslim countries: he acted as Director of the Islamic Centre in Sydney, Australia, and as General Secretary of the High Council of Islamic *Da'wa* in al-Azhar, and is also a member of organizations like the Egyptian Writers' Union, the Pakistan High Council for Islamic *Da'wa*, and the Sudan Society for Islamic *Da'wa*. He is also a founder member of the international council which researches into points of closeness between the schools of law. Professor Shalabi, who is a fine speaker, has participated in more than seventy conferences in Asia, Africa, Europe, and Australia on the subject of communicating the message of Islam. He has published more than fifteen works in English and Arabic.

7. The Islamic unity portrayed by the Qur'an.

8. A conversation between Bediuzzaman and a group of nationalists.

9. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani's views on how Islamic unity could be achieved.

10. The new plans to gain domination of the Islamic world and Islamic unity as a necessary means of foiling those plans.

> "The point of unity of this union (*ittiḥād*) and what binds it is Divine Unity. Its oath and its promise are belief in God. Its members are all believers, belonging from the time of God's covenant with man. Its register is the Preserved Tablet. Its means of communication are all Islamic books. Its daily newspapers, all religious newspapers whose aim is 'upholding the Word of God.' Its clubs and councils are the mosques, religious schools, and sufi meeting-places. Its centre are the two sacred cities [Mecca and Medina]. Its head, the Glory of the World [the Prophet Muhammad]."
>
> Bediuzzaman Said Nursi
> *Tarihçe-i Hayat*, page 62

An historical approach

In truth, I am a lover of history! I believe that for those who want to learn something, history is a 'teacher.' As Ibn Khaldun said, it is "the master of the life of this world."

I have always had the overpowering desire to read things about history. I have tried to read almost every book that has appeared on the subject. Before writing this paper, I was studying some historical material in connection with other research, in a way that could not be attributed to chance. A part of this was an article in the journal *'Urwat al-Wuthqā'*.[1] In it Jamal al-Din al-Afghani was saying:

> "The province of Islam extended from the furthest point in the West to Tokani on the borders of China. They were lands and regions bordering on each other. They had rulers who had never seen defeat. All the kings received the rod of rule from the supreme king and governed the whole globe in glory. Their armies were never routed, their sciences were never backward, their word was never gainsaid... The great philosophers Ibn Sina, Farabi, and Razi held the eastern wing, and Ibn Rushd and Ibn Tufayl held the west, and before them were natural philosophy, medicine, astronomy, and geometry, as well as the foremost of the Shari'a sciences which were widespread among the Umma and accepted by them.
>
> "The 'Faghfur' of China[2] bowed in submission when the 'Abbasid Caliph sent his decree. The most powerful of the European kings complied with his command. Muslim ships had undisputed supremacy in the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean. Their successors perpetuated their dominion over the seas even until yesterday, bringing with them their lofty decree, and defeating and casting down their enemies.
>
> "So what has happened to them today that they are all split up, that they have fallen into dispute and discord, and lagged behind the peoples they once outflanked? Their rulers also fell one by one. The words they uttered changed. Instead of supporting each other in the face of the enemy, they thought only of themselves.

1. *al-'Urwat al-Wuthqā*, Cairo, 20.
2. A title of the Emperors of China.

"In the course of time, the seeds of corruption sprouted among these rulers. They were seized by a false greed and ambition. They revolted out of their empty whims. They were deceived by principalities, titles of rulership, affluent living. They set up foreigners in positions of authority, who were opposed to their religion and nationhood. They expected help from them to win victories. They considered the good of the sons of their own lands to lie in their support.

"It was this that destroyed the Muslims of Andalusia, razed the foundations of Timurid rule in India, wiping out all traces of it. It was this that reduced the Islamic lands to being playthings in the hands of a few dissipated individuals, making them mere dupes for their deceits.

"See those who declare war on God (God forbid!) through perilous worldly greed and ambition!

"Is this the glory of the truth, the true meaning of justice? If only the Muslims had followed those scholars who act in accordance with their knowledge, had once again become acquainted with their own spirits, and nurtured the familiarity between them. But alas! Alas for the corrupters bearing the titles of 'Amir' and 'King,' who were to be given all the happiness of this world, and who neither commanded what is right nor restrained from what is forbidden, even in a tiny village."[3]

* * *

What Jamal al-Din wrote about the kings of the different peoples (*tawā'if*) in the present age, Ibn Hazm said exactly the same about the kings who ruled the peoples of yesterday. The Muslims of Andalusia were killed for the same reasons. The reasons the Umma's heart was wounded in a way that today is still unhealed are the same. Ibn Hazm said:

"If you ask about this dissension and people getting mixed up in it and their expected evil from each other, this is a test for us. We ask deliverance only from God, for it is a great dissension that will wipe away all religions, unless it be for His many-sided preservation.

"For this reason, the leaders of all the towns,[4] or the guards of Andalusia at this time, must fight for God and His Messenger; they must strive against corruption on the face of the earth, and against those who openly deceive the Muslims under the pretence of supervising their property; and for the purpose of crushing them, consider it permissible for their soldiers to act as brigands. For they impose the head-tax and land-tax on the Muslims, causing them loss as well as inflicting the Jews on them. While putting the Muslims in the position *dhimmis* and a minority, they themselves speak like the infidels and idolators. If the wishes of the worldly are realized, they will take advantage of the weakness of your aspirations. For they will do whatever they can to annihilate the elevated truths of religion and extinguish the zeal of this noble people. Then they will fabricate a web of lies to cover up all the evils they have perpetrated through their corrupt politics and cheating rule and numerous other means. For there are many doors that open up onto calamity. And God knows best what is right."[5]

* * *

3. *al-'Urwat al-Wuthqā*, 68 ff.; Aḥmad Amīn, *Zu'amā' al-Iṣlāḥ*.
4. The chief official of a town; in today's language, a mayor or governor.
5. 'Annān, Muḥammad 'Abdullāh, *Andalūsiyyāt*, 52-3.

One's heart chokes in horror on going into the details of the plans for the division and breaking up of the Islamic world and seeing the efforts to obliterate and destroy it. One time Shakib Arslan spoke to us of the hundred plans for the dismemberment of the Caliphate State. A conversation between the Russian Czar Nicholas and Sir Hamilton, known as the British Ambassador, show clearly the extent of these dangerous plans and the nature of their ideas and ambitions concerning the Islamic world.[6]

"On the dark night of the 9th January 1853 the Russian Czar Nicholas said to Sir Hamilton in his palace:

"'Think! We have before us a 'sick man.' He is truly sick. If we miss this opportunity, we shall have a lot to pay for.'

"Sir Hamilton was invited a second time to meet the Czar, who again said to him:

"'You are not uninformed about Russia's ambitions and aims since the time of Catherine the Great. As I said before, Turkey is a sick man. From our point of view, there is no harm in his dying. If he remains as he is, he will be a burden on us. If it is delayed, there is the possibility he will not die. Is it not better if we unite before a situation arises which will not profit us? I tell you openly. If we and Britain unite in this question, the others will not concern us. I tell you openly, we cannot put up with it, if Britain occupies Asitane.[7] I do not say you have such an intention. I say only that if you were to have, it would not be accceptable to us. For my part, I guarantee that I shall not occupy the city. However, this is only temporary, until we are presented with more attractive conditions. If you remain undecided on the issue for much longer, it will be permissible for us to occupy it at a single word.'

"Sir Hamilton gave this reply:

"'Permit me to say a word, your majesty. I have not the slightest doubt that the sick man is on the point of death.'

"The Czar replied very angrily:

"'If your government has any expectation that Turkey still has signs of life, know that it is misinformed! I state categorically that the sick man is in the throes of death. But we cannot permit him to die on his own while we sit around here waiting. On the contrary, we must come to an agreement. I cannot guarantee that we shall conclude a treaty. My only request of you is a general agreement.'"

* * *

At no time in history, even in the most violent periods, has the head of one state laid plans against a neighbouring country in the way the Russian Czar laid against that state in order to destroy it. Moreover, even the darkest periods of history, when primitiveness and savagery held sway, did one country's leader issue the death warrant for the leader of another country and set the time of his death. I truly believe such a thing never happened and that it never will. However, the roots of the trickery that planned this inhuman project and carried out

6. *Ḥāḍir al-'Ālam al-Islāmī*, iii, 307-8.
7. From this time, the plans were laid to occupy Asitane, that is, Istanbul, and to make Aya Sophia into a church again.

this savage attack stretched back into the European mind and went deep into their unconscious and emotions. Thus, even before realizing their ambitions, they agreed about sharing the legacy.

The British Ambassador's approach above demonstrates his government's attitude. However much he approached the matter with a good intention, it is my belief that his true intention was for Britain not to have a rival when it came to dividing up the spoils.

Following the setting of these plans, the fleets and armies started their attacks on every side of the Islamic world. Britain wiped out the Islamic countries in the Indian subcontinent, and gained supremacy in the Gulf. It occupied Aden. It stationed its fleets in the area, which it had brought from east and west, to such an extent that not the tiniest island or coastal town remained unoccupied. After Britain, France went into action. It occupied Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. Italy went as far as Somalia and Eritrea. Holland gained complete control of the East Indies. In this way, the Islamic countries of East and West Africa were surrounded. Finally, Egypt and Sudan fell to Britain. In consequence, '*Mijdār*' fell, and the Islamic lands were trampled under the boots of the Europeans. As the Prophet (PBUH) had foretold fourteen centuries previously, the Muslims had brought down this situation on themselves.[8]

* * *

Let us take one of the secret records recently published, in the name of the British Minister of the Colonies. Its date is 9/1/1938. This document says:

> "This war has taught us that Islam is the greatest danger we have to combat and resist. Britain cannot tackle such a danger alone. France is in the same situation. A matter we should be pleased about is the disappearance of the Islamic Caliphate. My hope is that it will never return. Our policy aims to forever prevent the establishment of Islamic Unity and solidarity. This policy must be continued. The policy we followed in the First World War against the Arabs was not aimed at only wiping out the Caliphate forces; besides removing the Caliphate, it aimed at reviving cries of racialism and nationalism in Egypt, Turkey, and other Islamic countries."[9]

In line with the plans they had made, the Western powers divided up the Ottoman Empire into small pieces like a butcher slowly slaughtering and cutting up his victim. The Arabs took the lion's share of this dismemberment in a special way whereby the first step was taken to break them off from Turkey. Iran was broken off in another way. Following this, Afghanistan was broken off, and it was followed by Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Azarbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakistan, and others. As said above, the Arab lands received the greatest share from this division. It was broken up into dozens of pieces and as though scattered in every direction. According to some people, the reason for its being divided up into particular portions was the rivalry between Britain and France. But if that had been the case, it would have meant that the Arab world would have been divided up

8. God's Messenger (PBUH) says in a Hadith: "As you invite them to eat something out of their dishes, so you will invite other peoples against you." *Abū Dā'ūd*; *Dalā'il al-Nubūwwa*; see, *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*, ii. *Mijdār* means 'scarecrow.'

9. Public Records Office, London, No: 55951371.

into three or four large pieces. For most of their lands were under the rule of the same countries. For example, although Syria and Lebanon were under French occupation, they were split up. Jordan separated from Palestine. It was the same in the Gulf states, and Egypt and the Sudan. And these were British colonies. The region known as the Greater Arab Maghrib was entirely under French rule, yet it still was not saved from being split up.

It is strange, but in India, where there was a danger of the country breaking up, Britain followed a policy of maintaining unity. But its decision about the Arab lands, where there were efforts to secure unity, was that it should be broken up in the most evil way. Here lies the Islam factor, which the West tried to wipe out by every means. The chief of these was the breaking up of the Umma into dozens of tiny parts which were as far from each other and hostile to each other as was possible. The result to be most strongly expected from this were border disputes that would lead to endless quarrels. This point gives us a clue about the disputes between Lebanon and Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Algeria, North and South Yemen, Iran and Iraq, Turkey and Syria, and so on. These countries' wrangles about each other's territory still continue. If we take a look at the map before us of this breaking up, we see dozens of Muslim countries. The Arab lands alone were split up into twenty-one or twenty-two states. But this policy was not limited to land; the colonial powers had many other plans they could not put into practice. To give some examples, France planned to break up Syria into three or four pieces. According to another plan, they wanted to break up the countries known today as the Maghrib, known at that time as the Far Maghrib, (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia), into at least five different states. The same is true for the countries of the Arabian Peninsula. All these examples verify my ideas.

To break up; in the very worst way. To scatter; everywhere in utter confusion. To wrest away; but slowly. All these were the methods the savage West employed in all their ferocity, and continued to employ. I consider all of them to be planned revenge. Revenge for the severe defeats they suffered in the Crusades. It consists of drawing international boundaries between the parts of a single community and bringing about division by setting up miniature states. The codes of law given to each of the parts (states) were all different as though each state belonged to a different race. They tried to instill Western modes of living in each part so that the day would come when the structure of each would be foreign to their own brothers. Everything was ordered to perpetuate the characteristics of the structure of each. A state was given economic support in so far as it conformed to the structure. Moreover, it was given the appearance of being self-subsistent. Thus, various ideas, rational and hypothetical, were implanted that were particular to the structure. They looked on the experiences they had gained from their history-long struggles against colonialism differently to those of their brothers. A new society emerged with its own leaders, parties, press, and particular modes of action. Thus, no need remained for the colonial powers to go to war themselves to complete the process of division. This had happened of itself

through a style of life they had imposed or instilled. Later on, the Islamic countries attempted to address themselves to searching for ways to establish confidence and co-operation between themselves, and such matters as setting up a common market, joint economic co-operation programmes, to reduce excise and customs dues, and adjust the application of visas. However, the removal of the divisions between them is the most direct and the safest way to achieve the above endeavours.[10]

* * *

In the following declaration addressing "all the Arab lands," King George V of Britain is requesting them to join Britain's ranks in their war with the Turks, their brothers. He says the following in his pronouncement, or rather his delirium:

> "To our friends in the Arab lands. (But we have never been their friends)
>
> "You know that (no, we don't know anything, George!) as the British people, we did not want to engage in this bitter war with Germany. But they nurtured enmity for the small states, their neighbours, and attacked them although they were guilty of nothing. However, Germany had itself guaranteed their independence through the treaties it had concluded with them and the documents it had signed.
>
> "As you know well, Germany has taken a dangerous path, plunged those around it into crisis, and using its genius, has deceived Turkey into assisting it. It has progressively augmented its power, and employing money and false friendships, is perpetrating its excesses on the widest scale. It requested the Sultan of Turkey to issue an order for jihad against us and our friends. For there are millions of Muslims under our flag, of whom thousands are members of our armies. They are fighting shoulder to shoulder with us against the Germans. And yet, the Germans want the Muslims to oppose us and not to support us.
>
> "Doubtless, all sincere Muslims whose hearts brim with the beliefs of Islam, do not want these beliefs to be taken lightly or to be made a plaything in the hands of a foreigner who picks them out as victims in order to fill his stomach.
>
> "Great Britain, France, Russia, and all Muslims, who are their friends, are spontaneously and enthusiastically sending all their young sons to us with flowers in order to fight against Turkey and the others. Among the Turks themselves, even, those with sound ideas are opposing the perilous path Turkey has taken. Perhaps after having been dragged into this war, some of you will ask what our intention was. To avoid confusion, I explain it as follows:
>
> "As the King of Great Britain and Emperor of India, among the conditions of peace and chief matters that will be drawn up on the conclusion of the war, I have accepted the condition of the Arabian Peninsula again donning the robe of freedom, and its former nobility and honour being returned.[11]
>
> "I do not know, is this sufficient for you? As far as we have seen, some of the Arab shaykhs want to be delivered from the hands of the Turks. Some of them are even strengthening our armies with their swords. If there are any among you who want to join us but are fearful to say so openly, I am addressing these words to you.

10. Munīr Shafīq, *al-Islām wa Taḥdiyāt al-Inḥiṭāṭ al-Mu'āṣira*, Cairo, 82 ff., 85.

11. They did just the reverse; they broke it up into pieces and destroyed it; they divided the region up into tiny states the size of cities. Were they going to leave it to its own devices, especially after the discovery of petrol reserves?

> "You should have no doubts as far as we are concerned. Watch for the best opportunity, and be certain that the opportunity will soon be yours to discard the garment of oppression and to shake off the dust of despotism. We are ready to assist you in every way in this matter. I promise you faithfully that with God's help and strength this Umma will very soon be saved from everything preventing its independence.[12]
>
> "George V
> King of Great Britain
> Emperor of India"

* * *

The Ottoman Empire was their first target. Was it not a centre of the Caliphate? Was it not the seat of the Sultan whom all Muslims considered to be sacred? But no one was deceived apart from the Arabs and their treacherous reply to the above ravings. No one else gave ear to this "call," only the ambition of the Arabs and Turks and their thirst for power and rule.

* * *

In Karachi, Mawlana Muhammad 'Ali and his brother Shawkat 'Ali were sent before the High Court accused of revolt and opposing the pronouncement King George had published. Muhammad 'Ali said the following to the members of the court, among whom was not a single Muslim:

> "Someone who declares war on his Muslim brother is not a Muslim. No Muslim soldier or officer can assist the British Army in hostilities against the Muslim people of Turkey. If a Muslim is forced into fighting another Muslim people, it falls to him in such a situation only to reject it. What is more, in such a situation, he should try to stir all Muslims into action. A Muslim who accepts Islam as his religion and Muhammad (PBUH) as his Prophet and God's Messenger, knows that it is not permissible according to the Shari'a to fight Muslims and join an army which kills them unjustly.
>
> "Members of the jury! Will any good come to their own country and army of Muslims who do not assent sincerely to God and consider it permissible to oppose His commands? Their God bestowed life on them, the honour of belief, and this sovereignty.
>
> "No, God is above sovereignty, He is above country. God is above everything. This is my belief. If you wish, hang me. Only know that by doing this you are committing suicide, for you are killing your own spirit."[13]

Without doubt, the chief of all matters is religion. The aim of everything is religion. One who does not begin his life with this, will not be able to live it in the true meaning and will not discover its true meaning. Man's prime duty is to live for God. Some people may receive honour and bestowal while carrying out this duty, but these should be only for God. Otherwise, like a dry leaf in the wind, they will be doomed to be blown hither and thither and to fall into the mud.

* * *

12. The Arabs realized the falsity of these promises only when they had been broken up into tribes and groups and bloody wars had broken out between them. The greatest calamity, however, was the loss of Palestine and setting up of Israil.

13. Quoted from the book, *Ayyuhā'l-Muḥallifūn*, 24 ff.

Bediuzzaman's position was identical to that of Muhammad 'Ali's. The following conversation took place between himself and one of the well-known Kurdish leaders, Hüseyin Pasha:

Husayn Pasha: "I want to consult you. My soldiers, horses, weapons and ammunition are all ready. We only await your command."

Bediuzzaman: "What do you mean? Whom do you want to fight?"

Husayn Pasha: "Mustafa Kemal."

Bediuzzaman: "And who are Mustafa Kemal's soldiers?"

Husayn Pasha: "I don't know... soldiers."

Bediuzzaman: "Those soldiers are the sons of this land. They are my kith and kin and your kith and kin. Whom will you kill? And whom will they kill? Think! Use your head! Are you going to make Ahmad kill Mehmed and Hasan kill Husayn?"

Husayn Pasha: "Death is preferable to such a life."

Bediuzzaman: "What has happened to life? If you're fed up with life, why do you concern yourselves with the sins of all Muslims, of all the wretched people? What do you want with them?"

* * *

In 1957, the French used Senegalese soldiers against the Algerians, when they rebelled against the French. On opening the doors of the prisons where the Algerians were imprisoned, the Senegalese soldiers saw the Algerians reading the Qur'an. Astonished, their rifles fell from their hands. They ran into the prison yard shouting at the French commander: "They're Muslims! They're Muslims!"

It was strange, but the Senegalese did not know the Algerians were Muslims. For the French had given them the idea that they were not Muslims and were enemies of the Senegalese.

* * *

The bonds of Islam are truly very strong. For which reason the Westerners have tried to weaken these ties and divide them up so that the Muslims have no place in the world.

* * *

God Almighty says the following to Muslims on the subject of unity:

And hold fast all together, by the rope which God [stretches out for you], and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude God's favour on you; for you were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that you became brethren; and you were on the brink of the pit of fire and He saved you from it. Thus does God make His signs clear to you; that you may be guided.[14]

Be not like those who are divided amongst themselves and fall into disputations after receiving clear signs; for them is a dreadful penalty.[15]

As for those who divide their religion and break up into sects, you have no part in them in the least; their affair is with God; He will in the end tell them the truth of all that they did.[16]

*So set your face steadily and truly to the Faith; [establish] God's handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind; no change [let there be] in the work [wrought] by God; that is the standard religion; but most among mankind know it not. * Turn you back in repentance to Him, and fear Him; establish regular prayers, and be not among those who join gods with God — * Those who split up their religion, and become [mere] sects, each party rejoicing in that which is with itself.*[17]

14. Qur'an, 3:103.

We can conclude the following from these verses:

Firstly: Call to the straight path; that is, adhering to God's Shari'a and its method. God's Shari'a is above all personal whims and reasons for division.

Secondly: Call to the true nature of things. The filling of the believer's heart with belief, in a way far from the lusts and desires of the instinctual soul, which lead to division instead of unity, and dispersal instead of coming together.

Thirdly: Call to perform the obligatory five daily prayers. The prayers are the sign of the unity of the community of believers, and of the brotherhood and close ties between the individual and society, and the society and the Umma.

Fourthly: Warning against associating partners with God and beliefs and actions springing from this. For associating partners with God means a multiplicity of Gods, which in turn means a multiplicity of ideas and aims, styles and means. The more gods multiply, the more the groups and communities believing in these gods will multiply.[18]

* * *

One of the most important movements which aimed to strengthen the unity of the Muslim Umma and prevent its breaking up was that of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. The American Lawthrub Stoodward said the following about it:

> "In summary, all Jamal al-Din al-Afghani's teachings were focussed on the many obstacles placed before the East by the West. The spirit of the Crusades had not left them, indeed, it had become more firmly rooted. It persisted as bigotry, with all its elements. For this reason, they employ every means to wipe out every sort of movement which aims at reforming and arousing the Muslims...
>
> "What the Muslims should do in this situation, in order to continue their existence, is to unite against these attacks. There is no other way of preventing the West's advance and resisting those things which have given them superiority."

Jamal al-Din al-Afghani said:

> "I gathered together my scattered thoughts and straightened out my muddled

15. Qur'an, 3:105-6.
16. Qur'an, 6:159.
17. Qur'an, 30:32.
18. Shaltūt, Shaykh Maḥmūd, *al-Islām: 'Aqīdatan wa Sharī'atan; wa min tawjīhāt al-Islām; wa'l-Islām wa Binā'u'l-Mujtamā'*.

ideas, then I looked to the East and its people. The first place I trod in those lands was Afghanistan. Then India. There, my mind received knowledge. Iran is like a neighbour and a bridge. The Arabian Peninsula: the Hijaz, where revelation came with its surety and loftiness; the Najd, Iraq and Baghdad with its Harun and Ma'mun; Damascus with its brilliant Umayyads; Andalusia with its al-Hamra Palace. That is the situation of every corner of the Islamic world, and of all its states. That is the East. I taxed my brain to the utmost to diagnose its sickness, I searched for its cure. Finally I found the cure for this fatal disease that breaks up the people of Islam, confuses their ideas, that makes them unite in conflict and conflict in unity. I used this medicine to secure their unity and awaken them to the dangerous deceptions of the West..."

* * *

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi passed all his life in exile, prisons, suffering oppression and persecution. But he never gave up his cause or hesitated. He never feared and never fell into despair. In many respects his life resembled that of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. The aim of both was the same, even if in form they were different. After visiting Jamal al-Din al-Afghani in his house, Shakib Arslan said:

"I asked about the Muslims' situation at the present time, although their forefathers crossed the Atlantic Ocean and discovered America first. Jamal al-Din gave this reply: 'Today's Muslims have no aspiration; their pride is numbed; their minds are dead. They have only one thing which is awake in them: their lusts...

"'The younger generations must be given a very sound religious education. This work must be undertaken by those who have vowed not to bow before anyone and not to give up in the face of any misfortunes. They should be people whose resolution can be destroyed by no threat, who are deceived by no promises of rank and position, who do not rely on trade and profit; on the contrary, who can endure every sort of difficulty and oppression..."

Is not what Bediuzzaman said and did exactly the same as what Jamal al-Din was saying here? Are the Risale-i Nur and the Nur Community not true universities for the education of a new generation? Are the Risale-i Nur and the Nur Community not exactly the 'university' Jamal al-Din wanted for the making of the new generation, whose aim is sincerity and being saved from backwardness and being annihilated?

In the sermon he delivered in the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, Bediuzzaman said:

"The reason for our unity is Divine Unity; our oath and pledge is belief; we are united because we affirm Divine Unity. All believers are charged with upholding the Word of God, and at this time the most effective means of doing this is material progress. For the Europeans are crushing us under their tyranny with the weapons of science and industry. We shall therefore wage jihad with the weapons of science and industry on ignorance, poverty, and conflicting ideas, the worst enemies of upholding the Word of God."[19]

19. *Risale-i Nur Müellifi, Bediüzzaman Said Nursî, Tarihçe-i Hayatı, Mesleki, Tercüme-i Hali*, Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1976, 54 / *The Damascus Sermon*, Sözler Publications 1996, 78.

"It is a circle bound with a luminous chain which stretches from east to west and from south to north; those within it at this time number more than three hundred million. The point of unity of this union (*ittiḥād*) and what binds it is Divine Unity. Its oath and its promise are belief in God. Its members are all believers, belonging from the time of God's covenant with man. Its register is the Preserved Tablet. Its means of communication are all Islamic books. Its daily newspapers, all religious newspapers whose aim is 'upholding the Word of God.' Its clubs and councils are the mosques, religious schools, and sufi meeting-places. Its centre is the two sacred cities [Mecca and Medina]. Its head, the Glory of the World [the Prophet Muhammad]."[20]

Bediuzzaman related the following anecdote:

"Close to the beginning of the Second Constitutional Period (1908-1918), I joined Sultan Reşad's tour of Rumelia on behalf of the Eastern Provinces. In our carriage of the train a discussion started with two friends who taught in the new secular schools and were well-versed in science. They asked me: 'Which is more necessary and should be stronger, religious zeal or national zeal?' To which I replied:

"With us Muslims religion and nationhood are united, although there is a theoretical, apparent and incidental difference between them. Indeed, religion is the life and spirit of the nation. When they are seen as different and separate from each other, religious zeal encompasses both the common people and upper classes, whereas national zeal is felt by one person out of a hundred, that is, a person who is ready to sacrifice his personal benefits for the nation. Since this is the case, religious zeal must be the basis with regard to the rights of all the people, while national zeal must serve it and be its fortress.

"This is especially so since we people of the East are not like those of the West: our hearts are governed by the sense of religion. The fact that it was in the East that pre-eternal Divine Determining sent most of the prophets indicates that only the sense of religion will awaken the East and impel it to progress. A convincing argument for this is the era of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and those who followed after him....

"Religious zeal and Islamic nationhood have completely fused in the Turks and Arabs and may not now be separated. Islamic zeal is a luminous chain which is most strong and secure and is not born of this world. It is a support that is firm and certain, and will not fail. It is an unassailable fortress that cannot be razed."[21]

* * *

Conclusion

Recently, a new book by Chris Helsel appeared in America, called *Prophethood and Politics*.[22] The author speaks of preparations for a nucleer war, and says that he received an invitation from an Anglican Christian community in America, and that it believes in Jesus' second coming and that the greater state of Israil has to be founded.

20. *Tarihçe-i Hayat*, 62.
21. *Tarihçe-i Hayat*, 92 / *The Damascus Sermon*, 59-60.
22. This work has been translated into Arabic by Muḥammad Sammān; Jam'īyat al-Da'wat al-Islāmiyya fī Lībyā.

The Greater Israil which stretches as far the Tigris and the Euphrates...

In order to achieve this dream, there has to be a nucleer war that will wipe out the Islamic countries that stand in the way and the other Muslims countries that support them.

Five years ago I read the following two news items in the magazines *Time* and *Newsweek*. The first said this:

"Israil has prepared an excellent plan to set up a statue in the place of the *Masjid al-Aqsa*."

The second news item was this:

"The Archbishop of Canterbury has paid allegiance to Pope John Paul II. Holding a lengthy meeting on the wars and hostility between the Catholics and Protestants, they have agreed on the question of peace."

All the alliances and agreements between the Catholics, or between the Protestants, or between the Catholics and the Protestants, and between the Orthodox, or between all of them with the Jews, are a continuation of the murder, bloodshed, and savagery that have been continuing for two thousand years.

The first and last aim of these accords is the elimination of Islam and Muslims from the face of the earth.

NATO openly proclaimed Islam to be its enemy.

The European Union continuously hatches new plans against the Muslims.

The World Council of Churches is endeavouring to drive Islam out of Aya Sophia, and restore 'Islambol' as the Orthodox 'Vatican.'

For at least fifty years, the Colorado Congress has been actively trying to Christianize Muslims.[23]

The Russian Jirinowsky, who takes delight in spilling blood, may intend to occupy Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey.

Israil is trying to erect a statue on the site of the *Masjid al-Aqsa*.

Missionaries declare they will not rest until the cross is set up on the minarets of Mecca and Medina.

The sole way of salvation in the face of all these enemies is unity and togetherness. And at the same time to pull the Umma out of the pit of discord and division.

"O Muslim! Ask yourself; who are you?"[24]

Are you still alive?

Or have you died?

Or are you a living corpse?

What is better than a person knowing himself and being melted in the crucible of belief?

23. See the work *al-Tanaṣṣur* for hostile plans against the Islamic world, and my work *al-Zaḥf Ilā Makka*.

24. Iqbāl, Muḥammad, *Jāwīd Nāme*.

Life is otherwise merely a smoke-ring or a cry that swiftly fades on the ear of time.

* * *

The Arabs and all Muslims must unite. If they do not unite and agree... if they do not unite and agree, God will bring a people whom He loves and who love Him. They are lowly before the believers, and proud before the unbelievers. They fight on God's way, and fear not being censured by those who rebuke them.

On that day, all believers will receive God's succour and be victorious. This is the truth, and its coming is close!

* * *

The Means of Communicating Islam in 20th Century Turkey and Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, in the Face of Efforts to Eradicate Islam

D. Mehmet Doğan

We have without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it. (15:9)

"Before the Great War, or around the beginning of it, I had a true vision. In it, I was under the famous mountain of Ağrı, known as Mount Ararat. The mountain suddenly exploded with a terrible blast. Pieces the size of mountains were scattered all over the world. I looked and saw that in that awful situation, my mother was beside me. I said to her: 'Don't be frightened. This is happening at God's command, and He is All-Compassionate and All-Wise.' Suddenly, while in that situation, I saw that a person of importance was commanding me: 'Expound the miraculousness of the Qur'an!' I awoke and I understood that there was going to be a great explosion, and after that explosion and upheaval, the walls surrounding the Qur'an would be destroyed. The Qur'an would then defend itself directly. It was going to be attacked and its miraculousness would be its steel armour. And in a way surpassing his ability, someone like me was going to be appointed at this time to reveal a sort of its miraculousness; and I understood that it was me who had been designated."

D. MEHMET DOĞAN (President of the Turkish Writers' Association)
Mehmet Doğan was born in Ankara in 1947, where he attended the Gazi Lycée. In 1972 he graduated from the Department of Radio/Television in the SBF Press and Publishing Institute. 1972-'74 he worked as a documentalist in the New Research Centre of the Turkish History Society, and 1977-'78 as a consultant to the Director of Turkish Radio Television. During this period he prepared the *Büyük Türkçe Sözlük* (Greater Turkish Dictionary). In 1980 he was employed in the Cinema Dept. of the Ministry of Culture as a film maker and script writer. He was a member of the Board of Film Inspectors. 1986-'87 he was a member of the editorial board of the newspaper *Zaman*, in which he had a daily column. 1991-'92 he wrote weekly articles for the magazine *Yörünge*, and at present has a daily column in the newspaper *Akit*. He lectures in journalist and writing in the Faculty of Communications in Gazi University, and was a founder member of the Turkish Writers' Association, the Mehmed Akif Trust For Thought and Art, and the Turkish Writers' Association Trust. He is at present General Director of the former. Among his published works are: *Batılaşma İhaneti* (The Treachery of Westernization); *Tarih ve Toplum* (History and Society); *Büyük Türkçe Sözlük*; *Halka Karşı Demokrasi* (Democracy Versus the People); *Camideki Şair—Mehmed Akif* (Mehmed Akif, The Poet in the Mosque); *Türkiye'de Darbeler, Müdaheleler, ve Siyasî Sistem* (Coups, Intervention, and the Political System in Turkey); *Kemalizm*; *Ailenin Kitaplık Kılavuzu* (A Guide to the Family Bookshelf); *Kültürel Savaş ve Savaş Kültürü* (Cultural War and War Culture); *İletişim veya Dehşet Çağı* (Communication or The Age of Terror).

1. Post-War ideology and the reforms aimed at eradicating Islam

It is necessary to consider as a whole the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War, the abolition of the Caliphate, the founding of the Republic, and the measures taken subsequently. The Ottoman Empire had remained as an island of hope in the eyes of the Islamic world, but after its defeat in the War the colonial powers obtained the means of destroying it, and this they then did.

The setting up of a new state in Anatolia and eastern Thrace was looked on favourably in the face of the threatened spread of the Bolshevik revolution. The Lausanne Conferance came to a decision concerning both the physical extent of such a state, and the extent of its influence. Those governing Turkey after Lausanne created the sort of country the victorious powers wanted to see after peace had been declared—a country distanced from Islam whose cultural and spiritual influence had been eliminated. In the intellectual field of this time, ideas were expressed in terms of official views which might be defined as "the post-War ideology." One may attribute to "the post-War ideology" the fact that the modernization programme which was implemented in the first years of the Turkish Republic was implemented forcibly, although it would have been possible to do so with popular support.

Turkey's rulers in the 1930's were right to boast that they had saved the country from Islam. The measures they had enforced since 1922 were indeed far-reaching, or awesome even. They had eliminated the Islamic institutions which had any political or social influence, as well as their visual appearance, and even their parallel culture. The matter went so far as prohibiting Turkish music. These measures were carried out over ten years together with extensive 'purification' or 'cleaning up' operations. **It is estimated that those killed during the 'cleaning up' operations exceeded in number those who died in the War of Independence.**

During this period, Islam was pushed entirely from the centre to the periphery, and from the towns to the villages and provinces. It was sentenced to being unofficial after having been official, and to illegality from legality. For a certain period every type of news and information about Islam was prohibited from normal circulation and from publication by the usual means. A policy was enacted of unified education (that is, education monopoly) and unified publishing (publishing monopoly).

During this period every means of teaching Islam —which had been supressed— academically at every level had been entirely abolished. At least theoretically, its legal existence had been made impossible. As though even, it

had been left aside. Anyone who looks through the newspapers and magazines of that time will see that Islam is mentioned only in connection with "political reaction" and negatively. Looking at the scene in those years what appears is this: it was as though the thousand years of Islamic culture had not existed in this country and that its people had not developed their identity and character through it.

Can a religion be eradicated through positivist logic? Can it be torn out of the people in whom it is rooted? According to those ruling the country, it was possible. It was attempted, through ideological education, to produce an anti-Islamic or non-Islamic generation in the years Islam was not taught at all. But due to man's innate disposition, this official education was not successful in the greater part of the country, let alone being completely successful.

The Latin alphabet did not accomplish the expected magic leap forward expected of it; everyone did not become literate in a short time with these letters, despite the claims made the 'National Leader' in his speech! In subsequent periods hopes were tied to the spread of education. As though, on the whole population receiving education (particularly higher education) everyone would lose their religion. It has once again been understood in recent years from girls receiving higher education who wear Islamic dress, that as a policy, to make education irreligious is insufficient.

2. Traditional means versus modern means

A number of people who have been given no place in the written history of recent Turkey, were successful in doing what the country's rulers could not do, despite having at their disposal large budgets, numerous officials, modern means of communication, and the armed forces. One who holds an important place among these people, whom the writers of Turkey's official history do not want to mention even negatively and avoid giving a place in their works, was Bediuzzaman Said Nursi. Said Nursi was one of those who took upon themselves the unaccustomed (passive) existence of Islam, which had been made illegal and had been ostracized; in fact, he was the foremost of them.

Said Nursi was not a new personality in the Republican period. In his youth he had been active in many fields from education to politics, and had gone to Istanbul in 1907 for the purpose of founding the Medresetü'z-Zehrâ, a sort of university, in eastern Turkey. He lived a very active life after this. He was in Salonica as a supporter of the Constitutional Revolution. He was one of the founders of the *İttihad-ı Muhammedî Cemiyeti* (Society for Muslim Unity) in 1909. He was arrested in connection with the 31st of March Revolt, but was acquitted. Said Nursi played a part in numerous events at this stage of his life, including fighting on the Caucasian Front and being taken a prisoner-of-war. Although he supported the National Struggle, he retired to Van because of the general situation after the War, and began to live in solitude on a mountain. The life that he lived here with a small number of his students may have been the period of preparation for the passive struggle he would later pursue. He was arrested in connection with the Shaykh Said events.

Said Nursi was later compelled to reside in Barla, a remote and inaccessible region of Isparta Province. The Republican government supposed that they had made him ineffective by exiling him to such an out-of-the-way place, and even to have eliminated him in some respects.

Said Nursi demonstrated two things in this place of exile. The first may be described as "Islam under minimum conditions." Lacking all resources, he was living in a tiny, remote village. His daily food probably consisted only of a bowl of soup. Secondly, he showed that it is possible to influence the masses without having at one's disposal any of the modern means of communication. He proved that ideas and the spreading of them to broad masses of supporters was possible in a country in which all the centres of communication had been taken under control and all channels of publication closed to Islam.

3. Adapting to new conditions from "Islam under minimum conditions"

In the 1920's and '30's when Islam had been pushed from the centre to the periphery, from the cities to the provinces, villages and countryside, and had been sentenced to being unofficial and illegal after having been official and legal; and when it was not even permitted to publish by the normal means any sort of news or information about Islam, the regime had not been able to eradicate Islam. This seemingly impossible situation was the result of the efforts of a number of spiritual leaders and learned men who conducted a sort of passive struggle, which might be called "Islam under minimum conditions," teaching religion without using the usual technological means of communication of the day, yet reaching the broad masses. Said Nursi holds a very special place among these leaders.

During this period the traditional educational centres and communications networks of Islam had been either closed or were under surveillance. For this reason Said Nursi did not disseminate his ideas from the mosque, which was watched. In the same way, the use of modern means of communication had been made impossible. It was not even possible to print books on a press, let alone produce newspapers or magazines. In fact, it was only possible to print Said Nursi's works towards the 1960's on paper assigned by Prime Minister Adnan Menderes from the state-owned paper mills.

Said Nursi responded to the printing presses of the Republican government, which printed thousands of books, and their newspapers and magazines with circulations of hundreds of thousands, and their radio stations which reached millions, with what might be reckoned to be extremely simple or even primitive methods. He spread his ideas by means peculiar to himself which were very ancient, without having recourse to the customary technologies. Since it was impossible to reproduce books on presses, they chose to duplicate them by hand.

However quickly it is done, writing out by hand is woefully inadequate in comparison with mass reproduction. Moreover, there were many illiterates in society and they were in the majority. Due to this too, the method of group

readings of the texts was adopted. These practices later became the source of the differences that arose between the 'writers' and 'readers' among Bediuzzaman's students.

All the official, authorized thinkers of the republican period have been forgotten. It may even be argued whether or not any thinkers were produced at that time. If there were any, they were thinkers who had a place outside the official ideology. Said Nursi did many things apart from thinking in this period. During his time of exile, he developed a stance that at first glance might be classified as "passive". Nevertheless, by the 1950's, it was estimated that he had nearly a million followers.

Just as in the field of religious reflective thought Said Nursi was both a traditionalist and a modernist, so in the question of politics, he was both outside politics and held a political position. However much he professed the view that he should remain outside politics, when the time came he did not hold back from supporting the Democrat Party against the Republican People's Party and its single party mentality.

Said Nursi pointed out that the world was undergoing a spiritual crisis:

> "A sickness, a plague, a pestilence, has been born in Western society, shaking it to its foundations, which is gradually spreading over the earth. What remedies will the Muslim community put forward in the face of this terrible contagion? The rotten, stinking, vain formulas of the West? Or the fresh, new fundamentals of the Islamic community's faith? I see that the heads of the great are plunged in heedlessness. The rotten pillars of unbelief cannot support the citadel of belief. For this reason, I have concentrated all my efforts on religious belief."

He put forward in this way the basis of his teaching. But he had an inward-looking side and it was possibly from this that his tie with politics arose:

> "What causes me pain are only the dangers to which Islam is exposed. Formerly the dangers came from outside and it was easy to resist them. Now they come from within. The worm has penetrated the trunk and it has become difficult to resist it. I am frightened that the community's body will be unable to withstand it, because it does not perceive the enemy. It supposes to be its friend its greatest enemy, who has its teeth sunk in its arteries and is drinking its blood."

Although Said Nursi used traditional methods to convey his message in those "minimum conditions," when conditions changed he did not oppose the reproduction of his works. New conditions brought new opportunities and these new opportunities had to be taken advantage of. Towards the 1960's his treatises were published with the support of the Democrat Party Prime Minister, and in this way a new period of communication began. This coincided with the years preceding his death. The means by which the message was to be conveyed after he would no longer be there, were clear.

On the one hand he took advantage of the new means afforded by the new conditions, and on the other, new possibilities or conditions were emerging in the field of politicts. For this reason Said Nursi never remained aloof from the political situation of the period in which he lived. If politics is the art of the possible, he lived his life to the end doing the possible.

After his death, things which for him were not possible happened and he continued to be the subject of a political settling of accounts. The ensuing events could not prevent Şanlıurfa from being a seat for him, but they prevented it being a permanent place of burial for him. There must have been some wisdom in this, for what sort of visiting place a known grave will be and how it will be visited is another question....

4. Religious expression utilizing the available means

The open expression or teaching of Islam by the existing means of education and communication in 20th century Turkey was made virtually impossible from 1924 to the 1940's. After *Sebilürreşad*, the journal of ideas that had been published in the Second Constitutional Period and had brought together Islamic thinkers and scholars under the direction of Mehmed Akif, was closed, no vehicle remained for the written expression of religious ideas. Mehmed Akif, who had participated in the National Struggle as a deputy in the National Assembly and had written the national anthem, saw that the possibilities of life in Turkey were exhausted and felt compelled to leave it for Egypt. During this period a few simple works were written with the people at large in view, but there were no publications for the intellectuals.

Having studied for a doctorate in France, Nureddin Topçu firstly published a journal called *Hareket* in 1939, and with his critiques of Western civilization and technology described the value of Islam in a way that provoked a reaction among intellectuals. In an article entitled "Renaissance movements" in the first issue of the magazine in February 1939, Topçu put forward a critical view of Western civilization, science and technology at a time it held unassailable prestige. He wrote:

> "The unrivalled dominant position industry has acquired in the 20th century was the product of 19th century positive science, which was without ideal, paved the way for the despotism of cliques, and the aim of which consisted of recognizing everything. Science ensured unchallengeable control over the raw materials of the earth, allowing the European nations to gradually exploit humanity in ever more efficient and guaranteed ways, where through spiritual and moral values they could have created a renaissance for humanity."

If you compare these ideas with the saying: "The truest guide in life is science," which had been uttered a short time previously and had become an official principle, it will show their true content.

Nureddin Topçu told intellectuals who expected salvation and solutions from Europe that Europe itself was lacking three dynamics, then said we should await from ourselves the rebirth of the age, and the most important condition of this was tied to our remaining outside Europe. "A nation like us who has embraced European civilization but according to the map is outside Europe, should await from itself the rebirth of the age. The most important condition for this is for us not to be on the map of Europe and to remain aloof from its greed and egotism."

In the same article, Nureddin Topçu discusses the renaissance Islam brought about in Harran in south-east Turkey in the 10th century. At the very least, this is

an approach that will put a end to the idea that the word renaissance is peculiar to the West. Topçu asserts that the nation's presence and human resources in Anatolia were the product of this renaissance. "The Islamic renaissance born in Harran in the tenth century gave its moral effulgence to sufism, the authentic form of Islam, and with its first surge, created in those centuries from the Turcomans who entered the religion of Islam, a nation in Anatolia. We are the nation whom that renaissance created."

As a Muslim thinker who had completed his education in the West, Nureddin Topçu played an important role in the formation of the Muslim type of intellectual in Turkey's recent history who had received Western-style education. Another influential and popular name in this field is the subtler poet and literary figure, Necip Fâzıl. In the journal *Büyük Doğu*, which he published with intervals from 1943 onwards, he produced a publication in a more popular and provocative style. While Topçu avoided almost completely anything to do with politics, Necip Fâzıl always tended to display and develop political attitudes and to form political relations. The notable point is their both having received all or part of their education in Europe. The shared sides of Topçu and Necip Fâzıl do not end here; another important side was their both entering into relations with Naqshi shaykhs in the 1930's and pursuing such a course.

If one of the ways of teaching Islam (*tebliğ*) after the founding of the Republic was through the minimum means favoured by Said Nursi and certain other men of religion and learning —by traditional methods and means, the second was conveying messages openly to the masses by utilizing new means of communication.

5. Transition from old means of expression to new means of communication

We mentioned two different ways when discussing the means of teaching Islam after the foundation of the Republic, which they had wanted to push from the centre to the periphery, and from the city to the provinces and the countryside. The first of these was the teaching of Islam under the minimum conditions, which was carried out by a number of religious scholars brought up according to traditional methods, who followed such methods. The second was giving clear messages to the masses using new means of communication.

Differences were experienced after the change to the multi-party system when those following the first way took advantage of, on the one hand, means of expressing themselves in the area of politics, and on the other, new means of communication.

Said Nursi who had been actively involved in politics at the start of the 20th century, had withdrawn from it completely after the founding of the Republic, and had chosen a way of teaching Islam which might be classified as passive and aimed at saving the people's belief. After the change to the multi-party system, Said Nursi did not return to the active politics he had pursued in the Second Constitutional Period, but he also did not remain entirely outside politics. He

assumed an attitude of support for the Democrat Party against the Republican Peoples' Party with its single party mentality. This was at the same time related to a section of people adapting to normal conditions having been saved from oppression to an extent. Under the "minimum conditions," Said Nursi had formed (had had to form) relations with the lowest sectors of society with respect to both social and cultural level, and had spread his ideas among them. In the final years of his life however, he had the opportunity to print his works, and from his point of view the ground was prepared for new conditions.

After Said Nursi's death, both the printed texts continued to spread despite various obstacles, and so did his ideas which were written and read according to the old methods. In time, a group of adherents emerged which was different with regard to education and occupation. The level of education rose, and the Risale-i Nur movement successfully modernized itself to a large extent in this regard through members employed in the government bureaucracy, universities, and business life. Nevertheless, although conditions had changed, it was notable as a movement whose unchanging aspects were preponderant. This was particularly in the case of its continuing its former political attitudes. As a whole, the Risale-i Nur movement became established as a conservative comment on politics.

Some members of the movement started to use modern means of communication, extremely belatedly since it had been previously possible. We can show the weekly *İttihad* newspaper, which began publication in 1967, as the periodical produced by the Nur movement. It continued in publication for four years. A campaign was started to turn it into a daily paper as a result of which the *Yeni Asya* newspaper appeared, first in 1971. The using of new means of communication opened up the way to disagreement among the members of the movement. Some chose to work entirely according to old methods. The *Yeni Asya*, which is still published, changed its name from time to time. The best known was the *Yeni Nesil*, which was published for a time as the newspaper of a different group within the movement.

No new leaders over a long period brought out new press organs. For this reason, this traditionalist movement became notable as modernist in communications and conservative in politics. The differences occasioned by the modern means of communication were again experienced during the emergence of a religiously oriented party (the *Millî Nizam Partisi*—the National Order Party).

6. Islam by all means!

Because the Risale-i Nur students had represented Islam under "the minimum conditions," they never made politics their first choice. Although conditions changed, their attitude towards politics was always as the lesser of two evils.

Although after Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's death, his ideas continued to circulate as before, doubts arose as new means of communication became available. A split occurred between those who did not want to use such methods at all, and those who were in favour of it. Further differences occurred among those in favour of it. Then further differences occurred in connection with the means of communication.

The members of the Risale-i Nur movement who had lived through the changes from "Islam under minimum conditions" to "Islam under optimum conditions" were able to overcome their doubts concerning the new conditions and the use of new means only as a result of a slow process. This process was at the same time a process of differences and splits.

It was a slow process in connection with the role to be played in politics, rather than new means of communication being established in place of traditional methods.

In a society in which the centre of politics appears to play a role, as a political stance, it may be as influential to be outside politics as to be inside them. However, the Risale-i Nur community's conservative stance, which amounts to its being neither inside nor outside politics, has formed an obstacle to the emergence of a clear political attitude. Doubtless, on the founding of the National Order Party in the 1970's and later when it was transformed into the National Salvation Party (*Millî Selamet Partisi*), the question of their relations with politics was the subject of debate within the movement. Certain individuals connected with the Risale-i Nur movement undertook important roles at the times these parties were established.

It should not be forgotten that the party system did not emerge as a new institution only in the period following the founding of the Republic, it was thus in all periods. There was no easy solution to how this new institution, which was closely connected with the existing conditions, should be interpreted or accepted. The attitude towards the new party led to delays in adapting to conditions and finally to a hardening of attitudes.

As a teacher of religion, Said Nursi did not form an organization with hard and fast rules and a bureaucracy. Just as such an organization would have been unnecessary, it would in any case have been impossible. It is always possible to suppress an organization with rules. Said Nursi was exemplary under "the minimum conditions," and in continuously performing his duty. He ordered his entire life accordingly, dedicating it to his cause and not even marrying. Perhaps in later years innovations were introduced by those who had taken the same path and had dedicated themselves to this work, due to their being sufficiently influential to found a political party. A group of those who continuously did work dedicated themselves to the cause like their master, rather than to the cares of daily life; this doubtless produced important results.

Fethullah Gülen started to win fame in the 1970's as a preacher. In respect of the Risale-i Nur movement, he was distinguished by having a different attitude towards the new conditions. His chosing —differently to Said Nursi— the mosque as the place for delivering the message was one of the signs of his adapting to the new conditions. For in the 1970's, the mosque held a position totally different to that of the 1920's and '30's. After the period in which the construction of mosques was forbidden, thousands of mosques were built by the people, so too congregations emerged to fill them. A further novelty was the government's opening 'Imam Hatip' schools and theology departments in universities.

As the places of not only a group of specific members, but of a congregration covering a broad spectrum of society, the mosques were in this way open to a broad message.

The group attached to Fethullah Hoja had recourse to the media not directly under their identities, but indirectly, in the same way that the Risale-i Nur students did not directly participate in politics. They still continue to broadcast in a way that expresses a general identity. In regard to working abroad, they lay great emphasis on educational establishments, in addition to newspapers, radio, and television. On the one hand they provide education, the need of a sick age, and on the other they try to create a more general Islamic identity through a simplified form of the Risale-i Nur movement.

On taking into consideration Bediuzzaman's life, it is immediately striking that Fethullah Hoja —who emerged from the community attached to him— is at the centre of a communications network. Essentially, this may be thought of as a natural process. The years he began to be known as a preacher coincided with when tape cassettes were first becoming widespread. In the 1970's Fethullah Hoja's sermons continued to be published by means of cassette tapes. He was at the centre of the new conditions, and those attached to him showed no hesitation in utilizing all available means and channels of communication. Fethullah Gülen's personal inclinations are also striking. It is known that he has a proclivity to several forms of art and that he writes poetry recalling the two great poets Yahya Kemal and Necip Fazıl. More importantly, a point that should be emphasized is that he sets his poetry to music.

The conditions today are different to Said Nursi's Islam at the minimun conditions. There are new fields and new possibilities and means. It is not possible to disregard politics as being among these new means. Nevertheless, politics, which is in the position of being the third foot of the tripod with the media and education, is still not clearly visible. One might call the recent efforts at externalizing to be an experiment in putting the third foot on the ground. But still it may be said that as possibilities emerge before a movement that has always acted cautiously, it will not be easy to take any decisions concerning coming out on any political side.

* * *

Bediuzzaman and the Politics of the Islamic World in the 20th Century

Ahmed Davutoğlu

1. Introduction

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's intellectual and social life and struggle are like a reflection, in a model person's life, of the various stages the Islamic world has passed through this century. The Islamic world has undergone four important stages this century, each of which forms a theoretical and practical totality.[1] The first stage comprises the first quarter of the century, until the collapse of the Caliphate, during which the Islamic world staged its final resistance struggle around the Caliphate against the Europe-centred West. This period, during which international relations were defined by imperialist rivalry, witnessed theoretical and practical repercussions of the anti-imperialist struggle of the Islamic world. The practicle front of this struggle was represented by 'Abdülhamid II's strategy of using Islamic Unity to resist colonialist pressure, the two Balkan Wars, the Trablusgarb resistance, the First World War, the War of Independence, and the

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1. For a detailed analysis of these four stages, see, Davutoğlu, A., *Civilizational Transformation and the Muslim World*; Quill, K. L., "20. Yüzyılda İslam Siyasasının Temel Meseleleri," in *İlim ve Sanat* (Mayis 1992), No: 7, 5-14.

Caliphate movements based in India, while the theoretical front was reflected in the debates concerning the reconstruction of the Islamic world in the political sense, which were most lively on the Istanbul-Egypt-India axis, the efforts at reform of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, and the ideas of constitutionalism and freedom.

The second period, which is from the abolition of the Caliphate till the end of the Second World War, was a time when the Islamic world lost both as a whole and bit by bit, its points of resistance against the international imperialist system. It was a time which, from the point of view of the Islamic societies, saw the most radical changes, not only of this century, but in the whole history of Islamic civilization. All traditional political concepts and institutions lost their practical validity. The institution of the Caliphate was abolished, which was the symbol of the unity of the Islamic world, and Islamic principles and institutions entered a phase of serious localization. All the Islamic lands were colonialized with the exception of Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan, and in these countries, the political culture and institutions which ensured that Islam was a true political and social force were abandoned.

In the theoretical field, the Muslim societies which had lost political support and centrality, defended Islam in the face of modernist ideologies which tried to set up religions, while in the practical field, they chose to resist their imperialist and repressive governments by forming religious communities and groups (*cema'at*). The great majority of the community structures which are widespread particularly in Egypt, Pakistan, and Turkey and today are known as Islamic movements, emerged in that period.

We may summarize in three main approaches, which were centred on three persons, the basic currents related to the Muslim groups' search for political theory of this period, in which the ties of the groups with theoretical and practical continuity were loosened: (i) The approach which rejected outright the political message and charactization of Islam, which forms the basis of the Caliphate, and the most important symbol of which was the work *Uṣūl al-Ḥukm* by 'Ali 'Abd al-Raziq.[2] (ii) The approach the basis of which was the reforming of the chief Islamic institutions, and foremost the Caliphate. Rashid Rida's work *Khilāfa*[3] is a typical example of this approach. Written on the eve of the abolition of the Caliphate, the work on the one hand states that the new regime separated the Sultanate and Caliphate in order to limit the power of an unjust Sultan, and on the other stresses the necessity of such institutions' existence, as well as their reform. (iii) A third approach dealt with the question of politics within a general philosophical/theoretical framework, the main aim of which was the renewal of principles. Iqbal's assertion in his work *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*[4] that the Republican Spirit could be realized through consensus is an example of this approach.

2. 'Alī 'Abd al-Rāziq, *al-Islām wa Uṣūl al-Ḥukm*, Beirut 1966.
3. Rashīd Riḍā', *al-Khilāfa*, Cairo 1988.
4. Iqbal, Muhammad, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, London 1934, 164.

In summary we may say therefore that the fundamental theoretical question of Islamic politics in this period was to be re-formed within a new framework since the concepts and institutions that had come down from history has been superseded. While the practical question was the endeavour to overcome through the forming of religious groups the problems created by remaining outside the political centre and to strengthen resistance against the international imperialist system.

The third period continued from the Second World War to the last quarter of the century, which may be characterized by the Cyprus war, the Iranian Revolution, and the Afghanistan jihad. The period was marked by the emergence of numerous Muslim nation-states following colonial revolutions, and those states feeling the need to come together within the framework of the ICO. Basic theoretical debate was focussed on the characteristics of these nation-states and the place of Islam within them, and it was in this period that debate on the Islamic state superseded debate on the Caliphate. While the main practical problems of this period were the inconsistencies between the identity of the citizen, on which the nation-state is based, and the universal Islamic identity; because of their Islamic past, the conflicts between these new nation-states and the international system; and the efforts of these states to set up political, military, and economic life as new independent elements of the international system.

At the beginning of the last quarter of this century, Turkey, which in the second period had taken the path of radical Westernization and had eradicated Islam from the social field, was compelled to clash with the West over the Cyprus question; the revolutionary model which emerged in Iran with the social explosion which overthrew of the West-oriented Shah, and its anti-Western discourse; the Afghanistan jihad, which showed up the impotence of one the great superpowers and led to the collapse of the bi-pole structure on which the international system was based; the *Intifada* movement, which with its social-based reactions halted Israil's militarist expansionism; all strengthened the solidarity and consciousness of a joint destiny which had emerged in the Islamic world in the 1960's with the attack on the *Masjid al-Aqsa*. Despite all its political problems and economic and military inadequacy, the Islamic world today is faced with a new and much more extensive challenge. Through the strengthening of the neo-colonialist structures, this challenge will either further shake the position of the Islamic world before the dominant powers of the international system, or it will generate the dynamics of a long-term awakening of a new civilization. Discussion of Bediuzzaman's life and his views related to the Islamic world will highlight various characteristics of these periods, as well as indicating what this awakening presages for the future.

II. The First Period: Efforts at resistance in the Islamic world and the Old Said

The historical line that separates the first period from the second also marks the differences, both theoretical and practical, between the Old Said and the New Said. The search for theoretical solutions in the first period, and the practical political resistance, were reflected in the Old Said's intensive scholarly and political endeavours. The Old Said conducted an active search for a solution in which the social aspects always preponderated. He expended much mental effort and was actively involved in all the questions related to the Islamic world, especially those concerning the Ottoman lands. For this reason it is in his works of this period, which he called that of the Old Said, that we find most of what Bediuzzaman wrote about the general situation of the Islamic world and his political and social views.

His chief works reflecting his theoretical and practical struggles of this time, and his political and social views, are *İki Mekteb-i Musibetin Şehadetnamesi veya Divan-ı Harb-i Örfî* (The Testimonial of Two Schools of Misfortune or the Military Court), which contains speeches and writings of the period preceding and following the Constitutional Revolution (1908) and his defence while being tried after the 'Thirty-First of March Incident;' *Münâzarat* (The Debates), comprising his conversations with the tribes of the eastern provinces; *Hutbe-i Şamiye* (The Damscus Sermon), which he delivered in Damascus; *Sünûhat*, which coincided with his return from captivity, when he was a member of the Darü'l-Hikmeti'l-İslâmiye.

1. Islam and the West: A comparison of civilizations

It is understood from the ideas that Bediuzzaman put forward in this period that he saw its principal questions not only as a political or historical conflict, but as a comprehensive struggle of civilizations; it was from this point that he approached the chief questions of the Islamic world. The comparisons he made between the underlying principles of Western civilization and Islamic civilization provide clues of the greatest importance from the point of view of portraying the social and political aspects of their world views.

> "... Because [Western civilization] is based on five negative principles: it takes as its point of support force, which manifests itself in aggression. Its aim and purpose is benefit and self-interest, after which everyone jostles and pushes without restraint. Its principle in life is conflict, which manifests itself in contention and discord. The tie between different groups is racialism and negative nationalism, which thrives on devouring others and which manifests itself in ghastly clashes. Its alluring service is encouraging lust and passion, satisfying desires, and facilitating the gratification of whims. ... The civilization which the Shari'a of Muhammad (PBUH) comprises and commands, however, will unfold after the disintegration of present-day civilization. It lays down positive principles in place of [the latter's] negative principles: its point of support is truth instead of force, which is manifest as justice and equity. Its aims are virtue and God's pleasure in place of benefit and self-interest, which are manifest as love and friendly competition. Its means of unity are the bonds of religion, country, and class instead of racialism and national-

ism, which are manifest as sincere brotherhood and reconciliation, and co-operation in only defending against outside aggression. The principle in life is that of mutual assistance and co-operation instead of conflict, which is manifest as unity and mutual support. In place of lust is guidance, which is manifest as progress for humanity and being perfected spiritually. It restricts the passions, and instead of facilitating the base desires of the carnal soul, it gratifies the high sentiments of the spirit."[5]

This comparison of Bediuzzaman reflects the normative characteristics of classic Islamic political thought. Based on values like right, justice, and mutual assistance, this idea is directed more to defining the values necessary for maintaining social stability and order than to analyzing social change. The idea of the sphere of justice, which is discussed by thinkers like Ibn Khaldun and Tursun Beg and had become the joint political value of just about all Islamic societies, differs definitively from the tradition of Western thought, which is based on competition and interclass conflict and is directed towards an analysis of social change. With this comparison, Bediuzzaman puts forward the Islamic tradition as a model that could be revivified in the face of the Western civilization system, which is based on force and conflict. The point that should be noted here is the inclusion of factors like fatherland (*vatan*) and class in this traditional scheme. By doing this, Bediuzzaman was trying to incorporate into the totality of basic Islamic values two fundamental concepts of the nationalist and socialist ideologies of the day, and to balance the destructive and dispersive characteristics of those ideologies.

Another important matter differentiating Bediuzzaman from other thinkers' approaches of the same period was that in the process of settling accounts with Western civilization, he mostly favoured a combative style, despite all the crises and defeats of the times through which he lived, and his decisive attitude, which emphasized the ultimate victory and superiority of Islam, or of the East. This resolute and proud stance, which was sustained sometimes by dreams and visions, sometimes by predictions about the future, and 'signs', always drove the Old Said to be optimistic, despite the negative atmosphere of the times in which he lived. The piece entitled *Rüya'da Bir Hitabe* (A Dream Address) in *Sünûhat*, which he wrote in 1335/1919, when all the Ottoman lands had been overrun and were in confusion, is one of the most striking examples of this state of mind:

"The East's enmity was stifling the development of Islam; it has disappeared, and so it should have done. The West's enmity was an effective cause of Islam's unity and the development of brotherhood; it must endure... Yes, be hopeful! The loudest and strongest voice in the coming upheavals and changes will be that of Islam!"[6]

Also, during that period, contrary to the modernist approach, which reflected a defeatist state of mind before the West and supposed that religious influence was the most important obstacle to development, he attempted to demonstrate comparatively that the development of the Islamic societies and those of the East could be realized only if based on religious foundations:

5. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Sünûhat*, Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1977, 44-46.
6. *Sünûhat*, 47.

"'History shows that the Muslims increased in civilization and progressed in relation to the power of the truths of Islam; that is, to the degree that they acted in accordance with that power. History also shows that they fell into savagery and decline, and disaster and defeat amidst utter confusion to the degree of their weakness in adhering to the truths of Islam.' As for other religions, it is quite to the contrary. That is to say, history shows that they increased in civilization and progressed in relation to their weakness in adhering to their religions and bigotry, and were subject to decline and revolution to the degree of their strength in adhering to them. Up to the present, time has passed thus."[7]

"The appearance of all the prophets in the East is a sign of pre-eternal Divine Determining that religion dominates the emotions of the East. Moreover, what is apparent from the situation today in the Islamic world is that what will arouse the Islamic world and save it from this abasement is against that sense. It has also been established that despite all the fatal blows it has received, it was again that sense that preserved this Islamic state. In this matter, we possess a characteristic different to the West; we cannot be compared with them."[8]

2. Statements about the chief questions facing the Islamic world

Besides setting forth Islam's superiority versus the West in respect of beliefs and always emphasizing his hope concerning the future, Bediuzzaman also made statements of great importance related to the practical weaknesses of the Islamic world and ways of rectifying these weaknesses. He took pains to differentiate between the deficiencies of the Islamic world on this point, and Islam itself. This is illustrated clearly in his saying: "I saw that Islam, which comprises true civilization, was materially backward in relation to present-day civilization; as though Islam was vexed at our bad conduct and was departing for the past."[9]

The Old Said looked on the world of Islam "as a disorderly chamber of deputies and council meeting, or one whose order has been spoilt,"[10] and attempted by various means to point out the sicknesses that had caused the Islamic world's backwardness. He sometimes gives these as the immorality that dominated society at that time, and sometimes attributes them to the erroneous views of the elite of the Islamic world. In The Damascus Sermon he puts the immorality dominating society into six categories:

"**Firstly:** The rising to life of despair and hopelessness in social life. **Secondly:** The death of truthfulness in social and political life. **Thirdly:** Love of enmity. **Fourthly:** Not knowing the luminous bonds that bind the believers to one another. **Fifthly:** Despotism, which spreads, becoming widespread as though it was various contagious diseases. **Sixthly:** Restricting endeavour to what is personally beneficial."[11]

His differentiating between Islam and the Shari'a, and the misconduct of

7. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Hutbe-i Şâmiye*, Istanbul 1960, 19 / *The Damascus Sermon* [English trans.], Istanbul, Sözler Publications 1996, 28.
8. *Sünûhat*, 36.
9. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *İki Mekteb-i Musibetin Şehadetnamesi veya Divan-ı Harb-i Örfî*, Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1978, 68.
10. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Münâzarat*, Istanbul, Envar Neşriyat 1993, 78.
11. *Hutbe-i Şâmiye*, 16-17 / *The Damascus Sermon*, 26-7.

Muslims also brings up the subject of the misconduct of the elite and their mistaken attitude:

> "The freedom, justice, and equality of the initial period of Islam, known as the Era of Bliss, and particularly at that time, are a decisive proof that the Illustrious Shari'a comprises equality, justice, and true freedom with its relations and requirements. Imam 'Umar (May God be pleased with him), Imam 'Ali (May God be pleased with him), and Salahaddin Ayyubi's works are a clear proof of this claim. Therefore, I state categorically: our deficiencies and decline up to the present time are the result of four causes:
>
> "1. Failure to observe the ordinances of the Illustrious Shari'a.
>
> "2. The arbitrary and erroneous interpretations of certain sycophants.
>
> "3. The out-of-place bigotry of ignorant externalist scholars, or knowledgeable ignoramuses.
>
> "4. Due to misfortune and bad choice, abandoning the virtues of Europe, which are difficult to acquire, and imitating like parrots or children the sins and evils of civilization, which are agreeable to man's base desires. It is from these that this evil result arises."[12]

3. The search for solutions to the crisis of the Islamic world

A. BASIC PRINCIPLES

a. Self-confidence

Bediuzzaman was able to think of the prescription for these crises as concentric circles progressing out from the individual to the Islamic world. What he emphasized most on the individual level was the Muslim's self-confidence being reinforced through psychological renewal. At a time of deep crisis and defeat for the Islamic world, in all his writings and speeches the Old Said recommended hope in the face of despair. Surely, during periods of crisis, the most important psychological factor keeping societies on their feet and making them struggle for the future is a feeling of self-confidence. To prevent individuals losing this psychological resistance, the Old Said sometimes uses the fundamentals of belief, sometimes natural events, and sometimes predictions about the future. Saying:

> "The future shall be Islam's and Islam's alone. And its ruler shall be the truths of the Qur'an and belief. Therefore, we must submit to Divine Determining and our fate of the present, for ours is a brilliant future, while the Europeans' is a dubious past,"[13]

he turns belief in Divine Determining into a dynamic focus of mental resistance. And with the words,

> "Just as every winter is followed by spring and every night by morning, mankind also shall have a morning and a spring, God willing. You may expect from Divine mercy to see true civilization within universal peace brought about through the sun of the truth of Islam,"[14]

he is referring to natural events that ordinary people also observe every day, and

12. *Divan-ı Harb-i Örfi*, 65-6.
13. *Hutbe-i Şâmiye*, 18 / *The Damascus Sermon*, 27-8.
14. *Hutbe-i Şâmiye*, 32 / *The Damascus Sermon*, 39.

trying to keep alive the Muslim masses' hopes for the future. He places so much emphasis on hope and confidence, that he shows even the calamities that followed the First World War to be successes and evidence for Islamic unity:

> "Since calamities are not pure evil, they are sometimes present in happiness, and at others happiness results from calamity. The disaster this Islamic state has met with, which from early days was the standard-bearer of the Caliphate and was charged with sacrificing itself for the united world of Islam, to uphold the Word of God and to maintain Islam's independence —its misfortune shall be made up for by the future happiness and prosperity of the Islamic world. For it has speeded up in wonderful manner the unfolding of Islamic brotherhood, the source of our life, causing it to stir. While we suffer, the World of Islam weeps. If Europe hurts us excessively, it will cry out. While if we die, twenty of us will die but three hundred will be raised to life. We are in the age of wonders. There are those among us who have been raised to life after being dead for two or three years. With this defeat we lost a temporary, immediate happiness, but a future lasting happiness awaits us. One who exchanges an insignificant, changeable, and limited present for the extensive future, will be the winner."[15]

b. Freedom and Constitutionalism

The basis element in Bediuzzaman's thought system which forged the link between the individual and society was the idea of freedom, which transforms the psychological renewal and feeling of confidence in social and political participation. In the period of the New Said, Bediuzzaman expressed this as "my freedom, which I am most in need of and is the most important principle in my life;"[16] and: "I can live without bread, but I can't live without freedom."[17] While saying: "The true believer is truly free. One who is the slave and servant of the Maker of the world will not condescend to lower himself before His creatures. That is to say, freedom is increased to the degree belief is strengthened,"[18] he is pointing out by making a direct connection between belief and freedom that freedom in the true sense acquires its value through Islamic belief.

The logical connection Bediuzzaman makes between belief, freedom, and law forms the basis of his political views and the individual's political participation:

> "For one who through the bond of belief is the servant of the Sovereign of the universe will not lower and abase himself before others, nor enter under their despotism and oppression; his dignity and courage arising from his belief do not permit it, just as compassion which results from his belief does not permit him to agress against the freedom and rights of others. Yes, the true servant of a king would not abase himself before the arbitrariness of a shepherd, any more than he would himself condescend to tyrannize some wretch. This means that however perfect belief is, freedom shines to that extent. See the Age of Bliss..."[19]

Bediuzzaman's considering the relation between freedom and belief to be the most effective obstacle to despotism and arbitrariness was the most important

15. *Sünûhat*, 42.
16. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Emirdağ Lahikası*, Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1993, 18.
17. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, 19.
18. *Hutbe-i Şâmiye*, 86 / *The Damascus Sermon*, 86.
19. *Münâzarat*, 23.

factor in his supporting the constitutional movement. He mentioned this as follows in *Divan-ı Harb-i Örfî*:

> "I was saddened to the utmost extent because due to our ignorance and bigotry Europe supposed the Shari'a to be conducive to despotism. So I applauded constitutionalism more than anyone in the name of the Shari'a in order to give the lie to that supposition of theirs."[20]

From this point of view, he considered freedom to be absolutely essential for the Islamic societies' independence, both of their internal political structures, and in foreign relations:

> "The first door of Asia and the World of Islam is the constitutionalism which is in accordance with the Shari'a and the freedom which is within its bounds. ... Freedom is the sole means of liberating the Islamic world of three hundred and seventy million from captivity."[21]

As is understood from the above, to the extent it is restricted by the law and legality of the Shari'a freedom forms the fundamental principle of the political structure and of social progress. For, "delicate freedom [has to be] instructed and adorned by the good conduct of the Shari'a."[22] And, "general freedom is the product of the portions of individual freedom. The mark of freedom is that one harms neither oneself, nor others."[23]

Bediuzzaman's idea of freedom being limited by the Shari'a was also reflected in the practical political field. In the speech he delivered in Salonica on the third day after the proclamation of freedom, he said:

> "Do not misinterpret freedom lest it escapes us and makes us choke by making us drink our former stinking captivity from another vessel. For freedom is realized through conforming through good morality to the injunctions and conduct of the Shari'a."[24]

Inviting the supporters of constitutionalism to remain within the bounds of the Shari'a, the Old Said offered similar admonitions while addressing the deputies in Aya Sophia Mosque:

> "Consider constitutionalism (*meşrutiyet*) with the title of the Shari'a (*meşrûiyet ünvanı ile*), so that a new, covert, irreligious despotism does not besmirch that blessed one with its dirty hand, by making it a shield to its hatred. Limit freedom with the conduct of the Shari'a, for if the ignorant and the common people have unrestricted freedom and are completely and unconditionally free, they become dissolute and rebellious."[25]

Bediuzzaman made similar warnings, about limiting freedom with the Shari'a, to the rebelling soldiers during the Thirty-First of March Revolt.[26]

20. *Divan-ı Harb-i Örfî*, 15.
21. *Divan-ı Harb-i Örfî*, 41-2.
22. *Münâzarat*, 18.
23. *Münâzarat*, 19.
24. *Bediüzzaman Said Nursî, Tarihçe-i Hayatı, Mesleki, Terciime-i Hali*, Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1991, 52.
25. *Divan-ı Harb-i Örfî*, 15.
26. *Divan-ı Harb-i Örfî*, 23-4.

c. Islamic 'nationhood' and the question of identity

Another important principle, which formed the basis of the Old Said's political views and proposals, was connected to the question of identity. Each of the movements, Ottomanism, Islamism, and Turkism, which emerged towards the end of the Ottoman period, emphasized a different identity. Following the revolts of the non-Muslim minorities in the Balkans, Ottomanism lost its force to a great extent.[27] The basic differences at the beginning of the twentieth century were between the religious identity, based on the idea of Islamism, and the national identities, based on Turkism and the other nationalist currents. The Old Said observed the divisive influence of the nationalist currents, and on the one hand tried to establish harmony and a hierarchy between the two identities, and on the other, applauded by various means the national identities that served the ideal of Islam, considering them to be parts of a unifying Islamic identity.

The unity between religion and nationality necessitates the Islamic identity having the highest position in the identity hierarchy. This is also the most significant difference between Western societies, which have as their basis a nationalist identity, and Eastern societies, whose religion and nationalities form an inseparable whole. The reply of the Old Said to a question about religious zeal and national zeal asked him during Sultan Reshad's Rumelia tour, summarizes very succinctly his attitude to the matter:

> "With us Muslims religion and nationhood are united, although there is a theoretical, apparent and incidental difference between them. Indeed, religion is the life and spirit of the nation. When they are seen as different and separate from each other, religious zeal encompasses both the common people and upper classes, whereas national zeal is felt by one person out of a hundred, that is, a person who is ready to sacrifice his personal benefits for the nation. Since this is the case, religious zeal must be the basis with regard to the rights of all the people, while national zeal must serve it and be its fortress.
>
> "This is especially so since we people of the East are not like those of the West: our hearts are governed by the sense of religion. The fact that it was in the East that pre-eternal Divine Determining sent most of the prophets indicates that only the sense of religion will awaken the East and impel it to progress. A convincing argument for this is the era of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and those who followed after him. ... Religious zeal and Islamic nationhood have completely fused in the Turks and Arabs, and may not now be separated. Islamic zeal is a luminous chain which is most strong and secure and is not born of this world. It is a support that is firm and certain, and will not fail. It is an unassailable fortress that cannot be razed."[28]

In the Third Topic of the Twenty-Sixth Letter, which Bediuzzaman wrote

27. Nevertheless, with the Second Constitutional Period, the role of non-Muslims within the state mechanism again became a topic of debate and ideas foreseeing the Ottomanism current again gained currency. Bediuzzaman's saying during his conversations with the tribes of eastern Turkey (*Münâzarat*, 39) that non-Muslims too could be appointed to administrative positions like *Vali* (Governor) and *Kaymakam*, is in conformity with the Ottomanism current, which recognized their rights as citizens and their Ottoman identity.
28. *Hutbe-i Şamiye*, 56-7 / *The Damascus Sermon*, 59-60.

during the period of the New Said, despite being, in his own words, "in the tongue of the Old Said," he put forward this fundamental idea, and in the part addressing Turks in particular, drew their attention to their combined identity:

> "Being the most numerous of the Islamic peoples, wherever throughout the world there are Turks, they are Muslims. They have not become divided into Muslims and non-Muslims like the other peoples. Wherever there are Turks, they are Muslims. Turks who have abandoned Islam or who are not Muslims, are also no longer Turkish. Like the Hungarians. Even among small peoples there are both Muslims and non-Muslims. O my Turkish brother! You watch out in particular! Your nationhood has fused with Islam and may not be separated from it. If you do separate them, you will be finished!"[29]

Bediuzzaman fiercely opposed the idea that nationalism was a superior identity, and stated that the power inherent in the idea of nationalism could be used in positive fashion at the command of the Islamic identity, the superior identity:

> "Furthermore, in nationalism is a thrill of the soul, a heedless pleasure, an inauspicious power. For this reason those occupied with social life at this time cannot be told to give up the idea of nationalism. However, nationalism is of two kinds. One is negative, inauspicious, and harmful; it is nourished by devouring others, persists through hostility to others, and is aware of what it is doing. ... Positive nationalism arises from an inner need of social life and is the cause of mutual assistance and solidarity; it ensures a beneficial strength; it is a means for further strengthening Islamic brotherhood. This idea of positive nationalism must serve Islam, it must be its citadel and armour; it must not take the place of it."[30]

This distinction, which Bediuzzaman expressed in the tongue of the Old Said in later periods, is also to be seen in the political approach and practice of the Old Said:

> "The awakening of nationalism is either positive, in which case it is aroused through compassion for one's fellow men, and is the cause of mutual recognition and assistance; or it is negative, in which case, being aroused by racialist ambitions, it is the cause of antipathy and mutual hostility. And this Islam rejects."[31]

Bediuzzaman, who in the period of the New Said said in the tongue of the Old Said, "The cunning European tyrants in particular awaken [the idea of nationalism] among Muslims in negative fashion, so that they may divide them up and devour them,"[32] expended great effort in the first quarter of the century as the Old Said to prevent this splitting up. He strove to keep alive the idea of Islamic nationhood following the proclamation of the Constitution in the face of divisive influence of the negative nationalist movements which appeared:

> "Since in constitutionalism sovereignity belongs to the nation, the nation's existence has to be demonstrated, and our nation is only Islam. For the strongest bond of Arab, Turk, Kurd, Albanian, Circassian, and Laz, and their firmest nationhood, is nothing other than Islam. The foundations of an array of states are being laid, due to negligence and strife incited through the revival of the partisanship and tribalism of the Age of Ignorance, which died one thousand three hundred years ago. We have seen this."[33]

29. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Mektûbat*, Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1994, 310 / *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Letters 1928-1932* [English trans.], Sözler Publications 1994, 382.
30. *Mektûbat*, 308-9 / *Letters*, 380, 381-2.
31. *Sünûhat*, 13.
32. *Mektûbat*, 308 / *Letters*, 380.

In the sermon he gave subsequently in Damascus, he emphasized the unifying power of Islamic nationhood in the face of the seeds of enmity that were being attempted to be sown between the Turks and Arabs:

> "Freedom in accordance with the Shari'a and the consultation enjoined by the Shari'a have demonstrated the sovereignty of our true nationhood. The foundation and spirit of our true nationhood is Islam. In so far as they have carried the standard of the Ottoman Caliphate and Turkish army in the name of that nationhood, the two true brothers of Arab and Turk are like the shell and citadel of the nationhood of Islam, and the sentries of that sacred citadel. Thus, through the bond of this sacred nationhood, all the people of Islam become like a single tribe. Like the members of a tribe, the peoples and groups of Islam are bound and connected to one another through Islamic brotherhood."[34]

Establishing a direct link between belief and Islamic nationhood and unity, the Old Said considered working for Islamic brotherhood and unity to be a religious obligation. This approach states that Muslims should unite around a single identity and defines the theoretical basis of Islamic unity in the meaning of a religious obligation:

> "The aspect of unity of the *İttihad-ı Muhammedî* (PBUH) (the Society for Muslim Unity), which is the reality of Islamic Unity, is the affirmation of Divine Unity. Its pledge and oath is belief. Its members are all believers. Its regulations the practices of the Prophet (PBUH). Its laws the commands and prohibitions of the Shari'a. This union is consists not of customs, but of worship. Concealing things and fear are sorts of hypocrisy, but there is no hypocrisy in performing the obligatory practices of religion. And at this time, the most important obligatory duty is Islamic Unity."[35]

> "If you read the pages of ideas, if you see the way of politics, if you listen to the newspapers —those which speak truly—, which are the public preachers, you will understand that in Arabia, India, Java, Egypt, Caucasia, Africa, and similar countries, the idea of freedom has boiled up with such fervour that it has caused a great transformation of ideas in the Islamic world, and a strange revolution, and intellectual progress, and a complete awakening, so that even if we had given a hundred years as the price, it still would have been cheap. For freedom showed up nationhood. The luminous jewel of Islam in the shell of nationhood began to be manifested."[36]

It is a fact that the anti-imperialist nationalist movements acquired strength with the Islamic identity, and paved the way for the ideas of Islamic unity which emerged in subsequent periods. Anti-imperialist and anti-Western movements generally pursued their search for identity around an Islamic identity.

33. "Reddü'l-Evham," 31 Mart 1909, in *Hutbe-i Şâmiye*, 82 / *The Damascus Sermon*, 83.
34. *Hutbe-i Şâmiye*, 47 / *The Damascus Sermon*, 51-2.
35. *Divan-ı Harb-i Örfî*, 50.
36. *Münâzarat*, 28.

B. THE REVIVAL AND REFORM OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Thus, with the principles of belief and self-confidence, Bediuzzaman endeavoured to strengthen the psychological infrastructure, and to develop with the principles of freedom (*hürriyet*) and constitutionalism in accordance with the Shari'a (*meşrûiyet*) the process of the socialization of the individual within a balance of individual-society. So too, he endeavoured to set up a new political communications network based on consultation within the framework of these principles, and within this framework to reform institutions like the Caliphate and office of the Shaykh al-Islam.

According to Bediuzzaman, freedom limited by the Shari'a was the precondition of the institution of consultation, the basis of the political communications network. Freedom in accordance with the Shari'a, which he considered to be the primary condition for the future progress of the Islamic world, was directly tied to the mechanisms of consultation and sovereignty:

> "The key to the good fortune, felicity, and sovereignty of Islam is the consultation within constitutionalism. ... Since Islamic sovereignty is now dominant in the world, and will be particularly in Asia, all Muslim individuals possess a true part of the sovereignty."[37]

Bediuzzaman went further than Islamic political thought of the classical period in the question of consultation and individuals having a true share of the sovereignty, and in connection with political and social participation, introduced a number of new elements. Among these were questions like the transition from the individual political sovereignty of the Caliph to sovereignty being spread over all the strata of society in the form of Muslims having an actual share in the sovereignty, and the transition from the classical treatment of non-Muslims as 'people of the book' to their being treated as citizens, and their participating on an equal basis in the mechanism of consultation. In addition to supporting Islamic Unity and the political sovereignty of Muslims, Bediuzzaman considered it possible from the point of view of the Shari'a that non-Muslims should participate in politics and government. The most significant innovation here is the idea that the functioning of the political mechanism is an art or craft rather than something tied to belief, and that the views of non-Muslims should be taken into account within this framework:

> "The votes of Haço or Berham, who are craftsmen when it comes to making watches or working machines, are valid. The Shari'a does not reject them, and they should not be rejected, for the majority of the political advantages and economic benefits of the Chamber of Deputies are of this sort."[38]

This approach is based on the view that "the sphere of belief should not be confused with the sphere of [social] relations,"[39] and confirms that the concept of citizenship, the development of which was attempted in the last decades of the Ottoman period, is in accordance with the Shari'a.

37. *Divan-ı Harb-i Örfî*, 41.
38. *Münâzarat* (Ott. ed.), 38-9, as mentioned in Mürsel, Safâ, *Siyasî Düşünce Tarihi Işığında Bediüzzaman Said Nursî*, Istanbul, Yeni Asya Yayınları 1989, 155.
39. *Münâzarat*, 34.

In connection with sovereignty, this new approach sees the government as a place of service, and brings with it a transition from the idea of government being the end, to government being the means. There is nothing to prevent non-Muslims being governors [of provinces or cities] or *kaymakams* [officials of smaller administrative districts], for

> "constitutionalism is the sovereignty of the nation. The government is a servant. If constitutionalism is truly [applied], the governors and *kaymakams* are not rulers but paid servants. Non-Muslims cannot be rulers, but they can be servants."[40]

This is an example of how the rulings of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) can be re-evaluated in a new political context. Need and necessity may demand serious changes in rulings and institutions, for "need is the teacher of all things."[41]

> "The Sultanate and Caliphate are inseparable and are essentially united. They have various aspects, as a consequence of which our Padishah is both Sultan, and Caliph, and the banner of the World of Islam. In regard to the Sultanate he supervises thirty million, so in respect of the Caliphate he should be the place of reflection, the point of support, and source of assistance of the luminous bonds between three hundred million. The office of Grand Vizier (*Sadaret*) represents the Sultanate, and the Shaykh al-Islam's office (*Meşihat*) represents the Caliphate."[42]

In saying this, Bediuzzaman is repeating the traditional view of the Caliphate and Sultanate being held jointly. However, he also emphasizes the necessity of the institution of the Caliphate in particular undergoing radical reform based on consultation.

In Bediuzzaman's view, it was inevitable that, for the revival and arousal of the Islamic world, the institution of the Caliphate should be reordered so that all the Islamic world could participate in it:

> "Time has showed that the office of the Shaykh al-Islam, which represents the Caliphate, is not particular to Istanbul and the Ottomans; it is a glorious institution which embraces all Islam. In its present faded condition it is inadequate for the guidance of Istanbul even, let alone that of the mighty World of Islam. Since this is so, its position must be made such that the Islamic world may have confidence in it; that it may be both a source and a place of reflection; and it may truly perform its religious obligations towards the Islamic world."[43]

The most important renewal of the institution of the Caliphate would be through consultation, and through the collective personality that would come into being through consultation, acquiring a dominant position. It was only in this way that the office of Shaykh al-Islam could obtain true power. The view that the mechanism of consultation and a collective personality which took its strength from this mechanism should be the sources of authority was an original contribution of Bediuzzaman to the efforts to reorder the institution of the Caliphate in the first quarter of this century, and secure Islamic Unity.

This view also introduces new dimensions to the principles of *fiqh*. The

40. *Münâzarat*, 39-40.
41. *Sünûhat*, 39.
42. *Sünûhat*, 36-7.
43. *Sünûhat*, 37-8.

tendency towards more anonymous and abstract concepts like the corporate spirit or collective personality in place of the individuality of *ijtihad,* and of allegiance (*bey'at*), which legitimized the Caliphate, may be seen as a new and original effort to establish a tie between Islamic institutions and the concepts of state and sovereignty, which became increasingly anonymous and abstract in the 19th century:

> "We are not in the old times now. Formerly, a single individual ruled. And the ruler's *mufti* could also be a single individual who corrected and modified his ideas. The present, however, is the time of the social collectivity. And the ruler is an unemotional, stern collective personality, which is somewhat deaf and emerges from the spirit of the collectivity. Councils represent that spirit. The *mufti* of such a ruler should be of similar kind to it, and a collective personality born of an elevated learned council. Then it may make its voice heard, and drive points related to religion down the Straight Path. For an individual is merely like a mosquito before collective personality of the community, even if he is a genius. Through its ineffectiveness, this important position exposes the very source of Islam's life to danger. We may even say that the present weakness of religion, indifference towards the marks of Islam, and anarchy in *ijtihad* resulted from the weakness and ineffectiveness of the office of the Shaykh al-Islam. For one person outside may preserve his opinion before a Shaykh al-Islam's office which is based on individuality, but the pronouncements of a Shaykh al-Islam relying on a council such as that can make him give up his *ijtihad,* even if he is the most brilliant genius, or it can limit it to him. For sure, all those qualified can intrepret the law (*ijtihad*), but such *ijtihad* becomes a guiding principle only when it meets with the confirmation of a sort of consensus or of the masses. A Shaykh al-Islam such as that would reflect this in meaning. In the Illustrious Shari'a, consensus and the opinion of the majority is always the means of *fatwa's* (rulings); so too, at the present time in the face of the anarchy of opinions, there is definite need for such an arbiter."[44]

Bediuzzaman asserted that the Caliphate could be strengthened by learned consultation by reorganizing the Darü'l-Hikmeti'l-İslâmiye, and that in the event of councils of this sort not being set up, Istanbul would lose its chance of being the centre of the Caliphate:

> "There is severe need for such a council. If it is not established in the centre of the Caliphate, it will necessarily be set up somewhere else. Even if matters that should suitably be realized firstly, like the organization of the Islamic community and the joining of the pious foundations (*evkaf*) to the Shaykh al-Islam's office, which are the preliminaries of the council, are begun at the beginning, and the preliminaries appear later, the purpose would still be achieved. By virtue of their official functions, the deputies and members of the Upper Chamber, whose electoral districts are both limited and mixed, may have a secondary and indirect influence on the matter. But a purely Islamic council is necessary to undertake this vast duty directly and primarily.
>
> "If a thing is not used for the purpose it was created, it falls into abeyance and does not show its desired results. In consequence of this, the Darü'l-Hikmeti'l-İslâmiye, which was founded for an important purpose, should be raised from the level of an ordinary commission. It should be deemed the natural member of the council together with the chiefs of the departments of the Shaykh al-Islam's office, and for now fifteen or twenty eminent scholars who have won the confidence of Islam, both religiously and morally, should be attracted from the Islamic world abroad. This forms the basis of this weighty question."[45]

44. *Sünûhat*, 38-9.

Bediuzzaman's comparisons between the institutions of the Caliphate and Grand Vizier's office are very important from the point of view of their describing the results of the disharmony between the functions of the Grand Vizierate, which was sovereign within the Ottoman borders, and the Caliphate, which represented the whole world of Islam. It is a fact that one of the most important questions of that time was that concerning the nature of the relations that it could establish with the Caliphate, which represented the unity of Muslims in regions beyond the reach of political authority.

The chief practical problem of the Ottoman rulers, who realized the theoretical necessity of making the institution of the Caliphate function and the international political advantages it secured against the imperialists, was their inability to express political will with the political power they held, that is, with the office of Grand Vizier, which would be effective over all the Islamic lands. The imbalance between this political power (*Sadaret*) and the field of responsibility (Caliphate), which Sultan 'Abdulhamid II tried to rectify through a many-sided diplomacy, resulted, when the leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress tried to rectify it by military means during the First World War, in first the Grand Vizier's office, then the Caliphate, being wiped off the stage of history following the War. When in Istanbul at the end of the War, Bediuzzaman pointed out the possible results the imbalance and unconformity between the political power and field of religious responsibility would give rise to, and made important points related to future developments:

> "The Grand Vizier's office and that of the Shaykh al-Islam are two wings. If those two wings of this Islamic state are not equal, the state will not advance. And if it does advance, it will be for a corrupt civilization which has sloughed off all sacred matters."[46]

III. The Second Period: The absence of political-religious authority in the Islamic world and the Risale-i Nur

The distinction Bediuzzaman made between the periods of the Old Said and the New Said reflect the difference between the first and second periods of the Islamic world. Bediuzzaman, who as the Old Said in the first period was actively involved in trying to bring about the political reforms necessary for the Islamic world, in the second period as the New Said, undertook to renew the belief of Muslim individuals, and to form a community or group of these individuals, rather than re-establishing the political structure of the Islamic world, which had entered a period of complete political suspension (*fetret*). This endeavour may be seen as the preference of the Muslim individual —who would found a new Medina— to revive the belief and community spirit of Mecca, rather than that of

45. *Sünûhat*, 39-40.
46. *Sünûhat*, 33-9.

a collective personality —which had lost its Medina in the sense of free political authority— floundering within the political machinery of false Medina's. Thus, The New Said's withdrawal from politics in the second period, —as in 'Ali 'Abd al-Raziq's approach— should not be seen as dissociating the Islamic religion from its political and social aspects, which are part of its comprehensiveness. In this sense, Bediuzzaman parts from 'Ali 'Abd al-Raziq's attitude, which reduced the Islamic scope, and from that of Rashid Rida, who sought solutions in institutional renewal. And although he draws close to Iqbal in some questions, he differs from him in his insistence on re-establishing the individual's belief.

In a period when philosophy-based ideologies were becoming increasingly influential on the political system, the importance Bediuzzaman attached to saving the individual's belief shows that he considered the basic solution to lie in making all Muslims points of resistance against ideologically based Western expansionism, rather than in institutional renewal, by saving the belief of numerous individuals. Such an approach was also in keeping with the general situation of the Islamic world in that period. A civilization which had lost its geographical and political points of resistance in this period practised resistance to the extent of the individual and community, so that Bediuzzaman's periods of the Old and New Said may be seen as reflections in the life of a model personality of this general situation experienced in the Islamic world.

According to Bediuzzaman, the chief matter of the Islamic world was the strengthening of the individual's belief, and solutions of matters related to life being sought only in reference to this fundamental matter:

> "At this time there are currents so overwhelming that they draw everything to their own account. So even if the true awaited person, who will come next century, were to come now, my conjecture is that he would renounce the situation in the political world and change his goal so as not to let his movement be carried away on those currents.
>
> "Also, there are three matters: one is life, another is the Shari'a, and the other is belief. In the view of reality, the most important and the greatest is the question of belief. But in the view of most people at this time, compelled by the world situation, the most important appear to be life and the Shari'a. And so, even if he was to come now, since to change these three matters altogether throughout the world is not keeping with the Divine laws in force in human kind, he would surely take the greatest matter as the basis, and not the others, so that the service of belief would not lose its purity in the general view and so that he would not let that service be the tool for other aims in the minds of ordinary people, who are easily deceived."[47]

Since Bediuzzaman saw that the only way the Islamic world, which had been entirely colonialized, could take in the face of the anti-religious ideologies was the strengthening of the individual's belief, he said in reply to criticisms that he was indifferent towards world politics, that the political and social path had entered a bog, so the struggle had to be in the form of illuminating with the light of the Qur'an those fallen into the bog:

47. *Tarihçe-i Hayat*, 256.

> "Service of the All-Wise Qur'an severely prohibited me from the world of politics. It even made me forget about it. For the whole story of my life testifies that fear has never taken me by the hand and prevented me taking the way I considered to be right, nor can it. ... It is like this: human life is a journey. I saw at this time through the light of the Qur'an that the way has entered a swamp. The caravan of mankind is stumbling forward in stinking and filthy mud."[48]

Bediuzzaman considered serving Islam by means of politics to be in tenth place after serving belief, and gave both theoretical and practical justifications for his point of view:

> "And the aspect of Divine Determining's justice is this: by ascribing to its wretched interpreter a large part of the extraordinary service to belief which is manifested through the truth of the Risale-i Nur and the collective personality of its students; and by the worldly, the politicians, and the ordinary people giving priority to Islamic politics and service of the social life of the Umma, which in the view of reality is only in tenth place after belief, over working for the truths of belief, which is the most important question, duty, and service in the universe; there is a strong possibility that in so far as the excessively good opinions of his companions for that interpreter give the politicians the idea of revolutionary Islamic politics, it will cause them to form a front against the Risale-i Nur from the point of view of social life and form an obstacle to its conquests. Both the danger in this, and the damage, would be great."[49]

The reason Bediuzzaman avoided politics in this period was not that he thought Muslims should practise Islam as individuals and not participate in the life of society, it was that the principles on which political life at that time was based did not conform to his moral beliefs.

> "Yes, politics at this time corrupts hearts and causes torment to nervous spirits. Those who want sound hearts and peaceful spirits should give up politics."[50]

On the contrary, he agreed in the necessity of the forming of groups and communities (*cema'at*), which emerged on the dissappearance of political support in other Muslim societies of the time, and considered it to be the time of communities or social collectivities:

> "The present is the time of the social collectivity. Importance and value are in accordance with the collective personality. The nature of the physical, individual, transitory person should not be taken into consideration."[51]

Bediuzzaman, who in the period of the Old Said supported the idea of reforming the institution of the Caliphate and the Islamic world uniting around a centre, in this new period, parallel to the loss of the last points of resistance of the *Dar al-Islam* including the Caliphate as an alternative world order, he saw Islamic unity as a non-physical unity. His withdrawal from the political field did not reduce the importance he attached to this non-physical union. The reference he made to Islamic unity in his defence in Denizli Court illustrates this point:

48. *Mektûbat*, 45-6 / *Letters*, 68-9.
49. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Kastamonu Lahikası*, Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1993, 142.
50. *Tarihçe-i Hayat*, 283.
51. *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 6.

"Yes, we are a society (*cemiyet*) and we are a society that every century has three hundred and fifty million [now one and a half thousand million] members. Every day through the five obligatory prayers, they demonstrate with complete veneration their attachment to the principles of that sacred society. Through the sacred programme of *Indeed the believers are brothers*, they hasten to assist one another with their prayers and spiritual gains. We are members of that sacred, vast society, and our particular duty is to teach the believers in certain, verified fashion the Qur'anic truths of belief, and save them and ourselves from eternal extinction and everlasting solitary confinement in the Intermediate Realm. We have absolutely no connection with any worldly, political, or intriguing society or clandestine group, or the baseless, meaningless secret societies concerning which we have been charged; we do not condescend to such things."[52]

IV. The Third Period: The Islamic world's liberation struggle and the Third Said

In the third period of this century, during which the anti-imperialist liberation struggles intensified in the Islamic world, and in Turkey freedom of religion and thought were extended together with multi-party life, we see that Bediuzzaman, who had particularly made it his principle in the second period to remain aloof from political events and developments, began to express his opinions to a greater extent concerning the issues facing the Islamic world and Turkey's place in it.

The parallels between the general course of the Islamic world this century and the course of Bediuzzaman's life are striking here also. A very interesting indication of this is his naming of this in the Afyon period:[53]

"Two or three times I have suffered a very significant state of mind. The preliminaries have now started in me of something similar to the strange mental upheaval which thirty years ago sent me up Mount Yuşa, having made me give up the attractive social life of the Darü'l-Hikmet, and did not permit me to take the late Abdurrahman with me even, the first student and hero of the Risale-i Nur, to see to my essential needs, and which disclosed the nature of the New Said. It is my guess it is a sign of the emergence of a Third Said, who will give up the world altogether."[54]

Bediuzzaman's reference to the Islamic world in particular in the admissions he made in his congratulations to Celâl Bayar, the President of the time, and his making a connection between the new government in Turkey and the new liberation movements in the Islamic world, were manifestations of a more active stance. In his own words, he started "to look again at the world of politics:"

"... So in five or ten days I took a look at the world of politics, and I saw a strange situation. As I said in my defence speeches, an atheistic current which is active through absolute despotism and absolute bribery, had attempted to crush us through torturing us on account of freemasonry and communism. I saw that now another current, which can break that power, had begun to emerge in this country.

52. *Tarihçe-i Hayat*, 349.
53. *Tarihçe-i Hayat*, 537.
54. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Şualar*, Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1992, 465.

... This time, together with congratulating the President of the Republic and Cabinet on their taking over the leadership of the *Ahrar* [supporters of freedom restricted by the Shari'a—Tr.] and taking on themselves the nation's destiny, I am divulging a fact; it is like this: ... we do not make religion the tool of politics, but in the face of those who to the awesome detriment of the country and nation make politics the tool of irreligion in bigoted fashion, when we are absolutely compelled to consider politics, our duty is to make it the tool and friend of religion. Then it may be the means of winning the fraternity of three hundred and fifty million brothers for the brothers in this country. In short: in the face of those who have ill-treated us making politics the tool of irreligion in fanatical manner, we work for the happiness of this country and nation by making politics the tool and friend of religion."[55]

In this new period, in internal politics, Bediuzzaman proposed to the new government in Turkey, policies open to religion and in foreign policy, policies aimed at Islamic unity, and he related this to Turkey's place in the new world situation. He drew attention to three main reasons for the existence of these new politics. The first was the rise of religious consciousness and its being the most important barrier against the spread of communism, which was the new ideological vehicle of the expansionist policies Russia had been developing against Turkey for centuries. Secondly was the religious bond which would be formed with the Muslims in Russia, which would act as a balancing factor against Russia:

"It is essential for the good of this country and Islam that before anything else the law dealing with the freedom of religiously-minded people is both speeded up, and ratified, and quickly applied in the schools. For its ratification will gain for this country a reserve force of nearly forty million Muslims in Russia and the non-physical [or moral] strength of the four hundred million world of Islam. Due to its enmity of a thousand years, it should have been us that Russia attacked first rather than America and the British, but what halted such an attack was undoubtedly the truths of the Qur'an and belief. It is absolutely essential therefore that in the face of that extraordinary force, before anything the truths of the Qur'an and belief are laid hold of in this country and a powerful Qur'anic barrier set up before irreligion, like the barrier of Dhu'l-Qarnayn."[56]

The third reason for these new politics was the threat of communism to the new balance of world power forcing the Western super-powers not to oppose the idea of Islamic unity:

"There is one sole solution in the face of atheism, irreligion, and anarchy, the greatest danger at the present time, and that is to embrace the truths of the Qur'an. For the human calamity that in a short time turned vast China to communism, cannot be silenced with political, physical forces. The only thing that can silence it are the truths of the Qur'an. Signs of the 'Night of Power Matter' in the Guide For Youth are now to be seen in both America and Europe. For this reason, the true strength of our present government is to rely on the truths of the Qur'an and to serve them. By doing this, through Islamic government, a reserve force of three hundred and fifty million brothers will be gained within the bounds of Islamic

55. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, 279-80.
56. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, 331.

the Christian states did not support this Islamic Unity, but now, because communism and anarchy have appeared, both America and the European states are compelled to support the Qur'an and Islamic Unity."[57]

In this new world situation and political context, Bediuzzaman brought up proposals for reform similar to those he had voiced in the first period. The most typical example of this new approach was his idea that the Department of Religious Affairs, which within the state mechanism had been reduced to the rank of petty officialdom, should be given a structure whereby it could undertake a mission which looked to the whole Islamic world:

"Like the office of the Shaykh al-Islam, the Department of Religious Affairs is not only Turkey's teacher of religion, it has a connection and relationship with the whole Islamic world in place of the Shaykh al-Islam's office, and [a duty of] supervision [over it]. There is great need at this time in particular for the World of Islam to have a favourable opinion of the Department of Religious Affairs, and not to think ill of it. It would be an important means of Islamic governments which are not allies of Turkey not thinking unfavourably that blessed department..."[58]

In this period, Bediuzzaman once again endeavoured to raise the idea of Islamic unity, now that Muslims were beginning to win their freedom with anti-imperialist action, and as with his warnings in the Old Said period, he warned against the divisive effect of racialist movements:

"One who gives up the sacred nationhood of Islam, like formerly, can trample the rights of a hundred innocents due to a single criminal, and apparently due to nationalism but in reality due to the vein of racialism, work against both religiously-minded Democrats who are lovers of freedom, and against seventy per cent of those in this country, who are of different races, and against the government, and the unhappy Turks, and the policies followed by the Democrats —although to do so may give rise to a racialist brotherhood as a most pleasurable bribe to egotistical souls. Due to his drunkenness, he is not aware of the great danger of transforming into enemies the brothers who are a thousand times truer that one pleasurable benefit within that pleasurable brotherhood. For example, instead of every day receiving moral and spiritual assistance through the nationhood of Islam and the universal prayer of four hundred million true brothers '*O God! Forgive all believing men and women,*' racialism makes him give up those four hundred million blessed brothers for four hundred idle loafers purely for some worldly and very minor benefit. This forms a great danger for both this country, and the government, and for the religious Democrats, and the Turks. And those who do it are not true Turks; noble Turks avoid such errors."[59]

57. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, 315. These views were also expressed by some of Bediuzzaman's close students: "Having been the means, at the wish of the nation, of the freedom of the marks of Islam, the only way the Democrats can now both preserve their position and satisfy the people is to make the movement for Islamic Unity their point of support. Formerly, the policies and interests of the British, French, and Americans were opposed to this. But they are no longer opposed to it, in fact they are in need of it. For communism, freemasonry, atheism, and irreligion lead directly to anarchy, and it is only Islamic Unity around the truths of the Qur'an that can withstand these awesomely destructive forces..." Signed, Sadık, Sungur, Ziya, in the name of the Risale-i Nur students and university students. (*Emirdağ Lahikası*, 287).

58. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, 426.

59. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, 419-20.

The Muslim groups who in the first period of the century had resisted the imperialists with the Ottoman Caliphate, and in the second had completely lost their freedom under the colonialist administrations, in this third period were struggling to set up independent national states. In this new period, Bediuzzaman attached great importance to the accords between the countries that had newly won their independence, and advanced the idea of Islamic unity against the clashes that might possibly have erupted between these countries due to their mistaken ideas about nationalism. His congratulating the President and Prime Minister on the alliance between Pakistan and Iraq is a reflection of this approach:

"I congratulate with my whole spirit your most successful alliance with Pakistan and Iraq, which you have achieved for this nation with complete sincerity, happiness and joy. I feel in my spirit this alliance of yours to be the certain introduction to universal peace and general well-being among the four hundred million Muslims of the Islamic world, God willing. ... Just as racialism caused great danger in the Umayyad period, and great harm was caused by it at the start of the Second Constitutional Period in the form of 'clubs' [societies], and harm was caused to the *mujahid* Turks by their blessed brother Arabs again through the exploitation of racialism during the First World War, and now too it may be utilized against Islamic brotherhood for there are signs that covert atheists, the enemies of public peace and security, are again trying to cause harm through racialism. The character of racialism is to be nurtured through negative action and causing harm to others, but since throughout the world the Turkish nation is first and foremost Muslim, their racialism is blended with Islam; it cannot be separated from it. Turk is synonymous with Muslim. And those who are not Muslim have cast off their Turkishness. Like the Turks, the Arabs and Arabness and Arab nationalism have combined with Islam, and it has to be like that. Their true nationality is Islam. That is sufficient. Racialism is altogether a grave danger. God willing, your most valuable alliance with Iraq and Pakistan at this time will repulse this dangerous harm of racialism and will be the means of gaining for the nation of this country four hundred million brother Muslims in place of four or five million racialists, and the friendship of eight hundred million Christians and members of other religions, who are in extreme need of peace and general reconciliation. I am telling you of this since the conviction has formed in my very spirit."[60]

In addition to this supportive stance in connection with inter-governmental relations, Bediuzzaman made direct contact with the leaders and groups of other countries, and his efforts to strengthen unity in the Islamic world are striking. Important indications of this new attitude are his meeting with the Pakistan Minister of Education about the subject of distribution of the Risale-i Nur in Pakistan,[61] and his making contact with the groups and movements that had emerged in other Muslim countries particularly during the second period. The relations he established between the Risale-i Nur movement and these groups, particularly in his reply to the congratulations of a member of the *Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, show that Bediuzzaman was determined to evaluate the new world situation with a view to the spread of efforts at unity in the Islamic world on the social level:

60. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, 463-4.

61. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, 314.

"In response to the congratulations written to me by the member of the *Ikhwan al-Muslimin* in Aleppo, I congratulate the *Ikhwan al-Muslimin* with all my heart and spirit, and calling down God's blessings, say that the Nurjus in Anatolia, who are like the successors of the old *Ittihad-ı Muhammedî*, and the *Ikhwan al-Muslimin* in Arabia form two associated and congruent rows of the many rows in the circle of the sacred society of the party of the Qur'an and Islamic unity, who are true brothers. Their sincere interest in the Risale-i Nur and their intention to translate a part of it into Arabic and publish it has pleased us exceedingly and made us very grateful."[62]

In short: a new world was being founded in the third quarter of this century subsequent to the Second World War, and the Third Said moved on from the New Said's principle of not even reading the newspapers and remaining aloof from politics. He was active in making proposals and contacts aimed at unifying the Islamic world on the level of relations between both governments and societies, so that it could become an effective power in this new world. If considered from another point of view, like the Islamic world which had smashed the colonialist models of the second period, the Third Said smashed the models of despotism of the period of the New Said, and tried to add social and political dimensions to the foundations of belief that the New Said had constructed. In this way, despite his increasing years, the Third Said combined the experiences of the Old and New Said's, and reflected them in social relations.

V. The Fourth Period and Bediuzzaman's political predictions

Bediuzzaman died in the first half of the third period of our categorization and analysis related to the Islamic world this century, and did not live to see the final period, which covered the fourth quarter. In connection with this period, we can only say that Bediuzzaman made extremely interesting predictions concerning it. For example, while in Istanbul during the first period, in reply to the question of Shaykh Bahid, an eminent al-Azhar scholar, "What are you ideas on Europe and the Ottomans?", he said "Europe is pregnant with an Islamic state, which it will one day give birth to; while the Ottomans are pregnant with Europe, and they will give birth to that."[63] Later, during the period of the Third Said he recalled this, saying:

"We witnessed the first birth with our own eyes; in a quarter century (Ottoman Turkey) was further from religion than Europe. God willing, the second birth will take place in 20-30 years' time. There are many signs in both East and West that an Islamic state will emerge in Europe."[64]

By saying this, he was alluding to certain developments in the last quarter of this century. It is possible these predictions allude to the formation of a significant Muslim population particularly in the Balkans with the breaking up of the Ottoman Empire, and in Western Europe with the dispersal of the empires of the imperialist powers; one may observe signs that this population will start to make

62. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, 296.
63. *Tarihçe-i Hayat*, 50; *Hutbe-i Şâmiye*, 27 / *The Damascus Sermon*, 35.
64. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, 368.

political demands. One has to see, in his words, "the way of politics"[65] in order to be able to foresee this conclusion.

Then while returning to Van from Istanbul after the Constitutional Revolution, the reply Bediuzzaman gave the Russian policeman with whom he spoke, telling him he was planning his *medrese*, is an indication of the greatest importance from the point of view of his political predictions about future periods:

"Three lights are beginning to be revealed one after the other in Asia and the world of Islam. While with you three layers of darkness will start to recede one over the other. This veil of despotism shall be rent; it will shrink back, and I shall come and build my medrese here. ... They have gone to study. It is like this: India is an able son of Islam; it is studying in the high school of the British. Egypt is a clever son of Islam; it is taking lessons in the British school for civil servants. Caucasia and Turkestan are two valiant sons of Islam; they are training in the Russian war academy. And so on. You see, after these noble sons of Islam have received their diplomas, each will lead a continent, and, waving the banner of Islam, their just and mighty father, on the horizons of perfection, they will proclaim the mystery of pre-eternal wisdom inherent in mankind in the view of pre-eternal Divine Determining and in the face of obstinate fate."[66]

Again, at the beginning of the time of the Cold War when materialist philosophy and the socialist movements were gaining strength, he said:

"With the powerful awakening brought about in mankind by two ghastly world wars, and man being awakened completely, most certainly no nation can exist without religion; Russia too cannot continue without religion,"[67]

which foresees the beginning of a religious awakening on socialist philosophy being abandoned in the Soviet republics.

This holds great importance from the point of view of the period it was said and its characteristics, for they may be seen as predictions of the revolutions against colonialism in the third period and the collapse of the soviets and Caucasia and Central Asia gaining their freedom. The above quote, which was said immediately preceding the First World War when the Islamic world generally was in a dire situation, should be seen as a sign of a powerful faith and self-confidence. In The Damascus Sermon, a work of the Old Said, Bediuzzaman said that the most serious sickness afflicting the Islamic world was despair and hopelessness. This self-confidence features in many of his works, and played an important role in preventing the spread of a psychology of despair. It was this powerful belief and self-confidence that made him declare in that dark time for the Islamic world:

"Moreover, the veils that have eclipsed the sun of Islam, hindered its emergence and prevented it illuminating mankind have begun to disperse. Those things that were hindering it have begun to fall back. The signs of the dawn appeared forty-five years ago. Then the true dawn broke in 1371/1951, or it will break. Even if it is the false dawn, in thirty or forty years' time the true dawn will break."[68]

65. *Münâzarat*, 27.
66. *Tarihçe-i Hayat*, 73.
67. *Emirdağ Lahikası*, 331.
68. *Hutbe-i Şâmiye*, 23 / *The Damascus Sermon*, 32.

It is a fact that the veilswhich grew ever denser before the Islamic world in the second quarter of the century, that is, the second period of our analysis, began to fold back in the third period. The clashes which broke out in the fourth period between the dominant powers of the international system and the Islamic world paved the way for the development of the consciousness of a joint destiny even among the pro-Western political elite. Finally, the Bosnia crisis played a role in strengthening this consciousness of a joint destiny and solidarity.

Despite all the political, economic, and cultural crises, the Islamic world is on the threshold of a new flowering of its civilization. In this new and difficult time, more than ever need will be felt for the messages of Bediuzzaman, who as a model person, lived through the stages the Islamic world undergone over a century, and for his proud and dignified stance which aroused respect in even his enemies, and for his powerful voice, which proclaimed:

> "Yes, be hopeful! The loudest and strongest voice in the coming upheavals and changes will be that of Islam!"[69]

* * *

69. *Sünûhat*, 47.

Bediuzzaman as the Representative of Social Opposition

Davud Dursun

Said Nursi (d. 1960) was one of the most important personalities of the final period of the Ottoman Empire and of the Turkish Republic, about whom the various social sectors in Turkey have in no way come to agreement and concerning whom is a wide spectrum of opinion, from the most negative to the most positive. His personality, ideas, and activities are the subject of varying views and opinions because his life has not been studied in one line and because it comprised periods which differed in character according to the political and social conditions. It may also be said that Said Nursi's personality and activities displaying differing characteristics was also closely connected to the age and society in which he lived, which underwent radical political and social changes, and transformations of the greatest importance.

Up to the present, Said Nursi has been the subject of much research and debate, and many studies, from different angles. Various evaluations have been made of him, some in favour, some against; while have been condemnatory,

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others have elevated him to sainthood, ascribing to him qualities above the ordinary. Having been studied as a scholar of religion, a regenerator of religion, a saint, and a man of action, in this paper Said Nursi will studied as the representative of social opposition, and he will be considered from that point of view.

Three different periods, three different Said Nursi's

Although generally those who study Said Nursi's life make a twofold distinction between the Old Said and the New Said, as he did himself, it may be said that this does not fully reflect the truth and that it would be more accurate to study it in three periods. This distinction is followed for the most part because it was done so by Said Nursi himself. However, the period of his life called that of the 'New Said, from 1925 to 1950, which was the time of single party government, during which he remained totally aloof from political life, was under surveillance and far from his home region, should be distinguished from that following the transition to the multi-party regime. For we may observe significant changes in his conduct and attitudes in these two periods. In this paper, therefore, I find it more appropriate to consider Said Nursi in three different periods: a) before 1925; b) 1925 to 1950; and c) following 1950.

Said Nursi before 1925: an active opponent in political life

Said Nursi used the expression 'the Old Said' for his life before 1925. He was born in 1876 or 1877 in the village of Nurs, which was attached to the township of İsparit in the sub-district of Bitlis called Hizan. On reaching the age of nine, he embarked on his education in the medreses in the surrounding area, and the attitude and behaviour he displayed here marked him out as someone with a different and oppositional personality. During his medrese education, he showed that he could not abide injustice, wrongs, and unfairness, and when he encountered such treatment, he considered it his duty to oppose it. The attitude and conduct he displayed during his terms in the medreses of Tağ, Pirmis, and Hizan highlighted his oppositional personality.[1]

It may be said that Said Nursi's opposition can be studied on two planes; one, as was stated above, the plane of his personality, and the other, the plane of the environment, which was the result of the social and political conditions of the time. Basically the two are complementary, and play a role in his becoming prominent as a representative of opposition and being active in this context. The oppositional character and psychological characteristics that were observed in him during his early education were to be a positive asset when he undertook the duty of representative of social opposition in the chaotic situation the social and political conditions gave rise to in his later life.

Said Nursi was born into a family which produced men of religion. He spent his childhood in the *medreses* receiving a traditional education, and in his youth became acquainted with political matters due to the tribal disputes. His assuming

1. Badıllı, Abdülkadir, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursî: Mufassal Tarihçe-i Hayatı*, Istanbul, Timaş Yayınları 1990, i, 57-65; *Bediüzzaman Said Nursî, Tarihçe-i Hayatı (Tarihçe)*, Istanbul, Envar Neşriyat 1993, 30 ff.

particular roles in the rivalry between the shaykhs, tribes, and local forces, brought him face to face with political and social problems at what might be called an early age. His combative and oppositional character since his childhood did not allow him to remain long in one place; he continually visited different towns, which gave him the opportunity to see from close by the people and problems of the area. His playing a conciliatory role in inter-tribal disputes may be seen as being in conformity with his character. Said Nursi's proud, unbending, and serious stance is clearly to be seen in his calling Mustafa Pasha, the chief of the Miran tribe, to guidance after having a dream.[2]

It is related that Said Nursi became involved in political activities in 1892 while he was in Mardin. He encountered there two people who were passing through the town, one of whom was a follower of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and the other of the Sanusi movement, and he was influenced by them. Because of his political activities, the *Mutasarrif* of Mardin was compelled to expel him from the town under armed guard, and sent him to Bitlis. In the biography written under Said Nursi's supervision, it says: "his political life began first in Mardin."[3]

Said Nursi succeeding in being included in the retinue of Ömer Pasha, the Governor of Bitlis, and remaining there, taught the Governor's children. He later left Bitlis for Van on the invitation of the Governor, Hasan Pasha, and entered his service. His working in the retinues of the governors opened up new horizons for him, and he found the opportunity of following current affairs and political matters. In addition to his post as consultant to the Governor, he acted as an intermediary in tribal disputes, which was an important activity for him.[4]

Said Nursi went to Istanbul for the first time in early 1908 in order to present a petition to the Sultan-Caliph concerning the founding of a university in Van, but the attempt was not successful. It may be asserted even that 'Abdülhamid II's sending him to a lunatic asylum and displaying no interest in his university project was influential in his becoming more actively involved in political struggle from this date. Moreover, in the speeches he gave in Istanbul three days after the proclamation of the Constitution on 24 July, 1908, and following that in Salonica, the concepts he used and emphases he made greatly resembled those used by the representatives of the opposition to the 'Abdulhamid regime at that time. The concepts like 'freedom,' 'captivity,' 'oppressed nation,' 'progress,' 'civilization,' 'despotism,' 'constitutional government,' 'sovereignty of the nation,' 'fatherland,' 'Shari'a,' 'unity,' and 'constitutionalism' were frequently used by those opposing the government.[5] The speech Said Nursi gave in Salonica on the one hand reflects the basic tendencies of the period, and on the other expresses important anxieties. He greets freedom as "the freedom which is in accordance with the Shari'a," considers the new situation to be equivalent to

2. Badıllı, i, 87-90; *Tarihçe*, 40-2; Mardin, Şerif, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursî Olayı: Modern Türkiye'de Din ve Toplumsal Değişim*, Istanbul, İletişim Yayınları 1994, 119-123.
3. *Tarihçe*, 43.
4. *Tarihçe*, 40-51; *Bediüzzaman Said Nursî Olayı*, 122-8.
5. See, *Tarihçe*, 55-7.

"resurrection after death," and voices his anxieties by making frequent references to the Shari'a. Said Nursi worked together with the leaders of the Young Turks in Salonica, which was one of the most important intellectual centres of the time, but although he used the basic concepts of Young Turk thought in his speech, what he understood by them and wanted to say was different to a large extent. For example, his saying:

> "O sons of the fatherland! Do not misinterpret freedom lest it slips from our hands and submerges us by making us quaff our former rotten captivity from another vessel. For freedom is realized and flourishes through conforming to the injunctions and conduct of the Shari'a and good morals..."[6]

shows clearly that he thought differently. Moreover, in an article published in the Religious Newspaper (No: 70, 26 Şubat 1324) he wrote:

> "... Constitutionalism, which consists of justice, consultation, and power lying in the law. The Illustrious Shari'a was founded thirteen centuries ago, so to go begging to Europe for laws is a great crime towards the religion of Islam and is like praying in the direction of the North,"

showing how differently he thought. Moreover, the new government did not hesitate to arrest him.[7]

Being actively involved political life in the Second Constitutional period, Said Nursi was first to be seen in the ranks of opposition to 'Abdulhamid II, and he later struggled against the Young Turks. His being among the founders of the society called the *İttihad-ı Muhammedî*, which was founded shortly before the Thirty-First of March (1909) Incident, on its own may be seen as a manifestation of opposition. For this society and the newspaper *Volkan*, which was its spokesman, were considered to be among those guilty of the Thirty-First of March events, and the *Volkan's* owner and chief editor, Dervish Vahdeti, was executed. Although Said Nursi denied that he was one of those guilty of the revolt,[8] it is clear he opposed the Young Turk government and resisted it. He told the Young Turks, "You have offended against religion, you have angered God, you have insulted the Shari'a; the consequences will be serious,"[9] and acted as spokesman for the Islamic circles opposing those in power, who supported Westernization. The *İttihad-ı Muhammedî* Society accused the Young Turks of following a policy of suppression based on terrorism and at the same time attacking Islamic institutions.

In the statement he gave in court while being tried for involvement in the Thirity-First of March events, he persistently emphasized "constitutionalism, justice, and the Shari'a," saying, "I applauded constitutionalism more than anyone in the name of the Shari'a." Said Nursi believed that freedom should be restricted by "the conduct of the Shari'a," and saying his predecessors were Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad 'Abduh, 'Ali Suavi, Hoja Tahsin, Namık

6. Badıllı, i, 167.
7. See, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursî Olayı*, 135-6.
8. *Bediüzzaman Said Nursî Olayı*, 138.
9. *Tarihçe*, 54.

Kemal, and Yavuz Sultan Selim, stated that basically the Thirty-First of March Incident was a movement against the despotism and arbitrary government of the Committee of Union and Progress. It is noteworthy that he concluded his defence with the following:

> "Long live Islamic Constitutionalism! Long live the shining Freedom which has learnt a thorough lesson from the instruction of the reality of the Shari'a!"[10]

Having been acquitted by the court, Said Nursi returned to Van, and there began to teach the tribes. In the work called *Münâzarat* (Debates), which, written in question and answer form, was the product of his activities here, he touched on his relations with the Young Turks and members of the CUP "more in order to win the Kurds over to constitutionalism and to break their opposition to the political leaders." Said Nursi described the Young Turks as "devotees of Islam," and said that although he objected to the CUP's violence, he congratulated their activities in eastern Turkey.[11]

Said Nursi returned to Istanbul before the beginning of the First World War, raised the question of his university project with the new Sultan, Reshad, and obtaining the promise of funds, returned to Van. But although the university's foundations were laid immediately, the enterprise was shelved on the outbreak of war. During the war, Said Nursi was taken prisoner by the Russians, during the defence of Bitlis, was held for two and a half years in a prisoner-of-war camp, and finally escaped in 1917, and returned to his country.

Between 1919 and 1921 Said Nursi was a member of the Darü'l-Hikmeti'l-İslâmiye, during which time he underwent a number of changes and did much conscience-searching. He then went to Ankara on being invited, and persuaded the Grand National Assembly to set aside 150,000 liras for his university project. In a manifesto he distributed in the Assembly, he admonished the deputies concerning their laxity towards the obligatory prayers, and drew their attention to developments in the question of secularism. It is said the manifesto led to an argument with Mustafa Kemal. In reply to Mustafa Kemal's saying: "We are in need of heroic hojas like you. We called you here in order to benefit from your elevated ideas, but you came here and immediately started writing things about the prayers, and have caused differences amongst us," Said Nursi said: "Pasha! Pasha! After belief, the most elevated truth in Islam are the obligatory prayers. Those who do not perform the prayers are traitors, and the opinions of traitors are to be rejected!"[12] In the manifesto, besides praising the successes of the National Forces, he emphasized the importance of the prayers, and criticizing the laxity of some of the deputies in this matter, called on them to perform them. This in fact was nothing other than serious opposition; having gained a general idea of the new government's tendencies, Said Nursi opposed it with this manifesto. But on realizing that he could do nothing in the face of Mustafa Kemal's authority and power,

10. *Tarihçe*, 78.
11. Kara, 1994, 68-9.
12. Badıllı, i, 439.

"... saying nothing can be gained from working with or responding to this person, I abandoned the world and politics and social life, and spent all my time on the way of saving belief,"[13]

he decided to leave Ankara and return to Van. On his arrival in Van at the beginning of June 1923, a new life, a new period began for him. In his own words, the most prominent characteristic of the period up 1923 and his struggle in it was his active involvement in social and political life and his appearing generally in the pole of opposition. Said Nursi, who had struggled against the 'Abdulhamid regime, worked alongside the CUP, and although he favoured some of their measures, he opposed others. He took part in the war, was taken prisoner, and fought. Following the war, he was appointed to the Darü'l-Hikmeti'l-İslâmiye, and on the invitation of the Ankara government, went there. He followed the work of the Assembly and opposed the new tendencies. He left Ankara, and on returning to Van, entered a new period of his life. From now on, we are not to see Said Nursi as an active protagonist on the political and social stage.

The New Said: A solitary life of persecution; the period of total opposition to positivism and materialism

On returning to Van from Ankara, Said Nursi went into seclusion in a cave on Mount Erek, and remained there till he was arrested due to the Shaykh Said Revolt and sent into exile in Burdur. His life following this was spent in exile, the courts, and compulsory residence. He was compelled to reside in the village of Barla in Isparta Province until 1934, then in 1935 he was taken to Eskişehir and imprisoned. In 1936 he was taken to Kastamonu and held under surveillance for seven years. In 1943 he was taken to Ankara, and from there sent to Denizli Prison, tried together with his students, and acquitted. Following this he was held in compulsory residence in Emirdağ. In 1948 he was again tried, and was sentenced to twenty months' imprisonment. In 1950 he was released following the general amnesty. In 1951 he went to Isparta. In 1952 he was tried in Istanbul and acquitted. Following his acquittal he returned to Emirdağ. In early 1953 he returned to Istanbul, and after staying for some time, returned to Emirdağ. After a short time he went to Isparta. Following the elections of 1957, he visited various towns, and wherever he went, was met with tremendous enthusiasm. Finally he died when calling in on Urfa on his way to Van.

We may dwell on various factors defining Said Nursi's attitude and conduct in this new period. It may be said that primarily a change had come about in his inner world and other proclivities had come to the fore, and that rather than directing his attention to the outer social and political environment, he looked to the interior, spiritual world. He described his return to Van and going into seclusion as "giving up politics and withdrawing from the world."[14] We see from this that he frequently used such concepts and called those who inflicted every sort of ill-treatment on him as "the worldly." In saying: "With all my strength I support total justice, and am against oppression, domination, arbitrary treatment, and despotism,"[15] he wanted to say that he did not consider what was done to be right.

13. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Şualar*, 333, as in Badıllı, i, 456.
14. *Tarihçe*, 177.

Seeing that he was no longer involved in politics and social life and was continuously held under surveillance, can one speak of his opposition? In my opinion, it was because of his oppositional personality, and the idea that he had a potential influence over society that the government perpetually dragged him from court to court, held him under surveillance although he had been acquitted, and compelled him to reside in certain places. Moreover, although Said Nursi was not actually involved in politics and social life in this period, he wrote a work of several thousand pages called the Risale-i Nur, and because of what he said in it, had a place in the pole of opposition. One should therefore search for his oppositional attitude and conduct in this period in what he wrote and advocated.

The period in which the Risale-i Nur was written, which constituted Said Nursi's most important activity, was the single party period, during which religion was excised from politics and the social structure, wrenched out of people's hearts, and Positivism gradually began to be influential. Said Nursi was aware that there was no possibility of involvement in active politics under a totalitarian regime when official assaults on religion and policies against it had reached a peak, and every sort of opposition silenced, and extremely radical reforms had been put into effect. He therefore directed his opposition not at the government leaders, who were also a result of the conditions of the time, but at the positivist-materialist view which formed the philosophical base of their policies. He endeavoured to oppose the policies of the time by defending religion in the Risale-i Nur and exalting religion over all else. By doing this, he both interpreted the feelings of society, and directed and developed them. And, for example, his not changing his dress and using the Arabic script despite the change of alphabet also displayed a general opposition.

It is known by everyone that the things done in the single party period and the policies followed were never identified with by the people and that it was attempted to impose them by force. For this reason, anyone who raised the banner of revolt, either directly or indirectly, was in some respects acting as a spokesman of social opposition.

Said Nursi fiercely attacked materialism and Postivism, which were the ideological infrastructure of the republic, and from the outset was seen as a danger by the authorities. For this reason they held him under continuous surveillance and tried to reduce his influence over society. Said Nursi considered irreligion, which, supported by the government's attitude and policies, gradually gained momentum, to be the greatest danger facing society, and he directed his main opposition towards that. It may be said that his ideas on this subject were similar to those of the broad masses of society. For the policies of the single party period were considered by the people to be irreligion, and they opposed them. The main development that worried Said Nursi was "the fear that the republican

15. *Tarihçe*, 184.

government's leaving aside Islam as the foundation stone of social organization and intellectual activity and its permitting 'the assaults of materialism' would lead to the disintegration of Turkish society."[16] In his writings, Said Nursi was not concerned with political and social problems, he discussed only the question of belief. In his own words,

> "The Risale-i Nur does not discuss the broad sphere of religion which encompasses the laws regulating social life; its chief subject and aim is discussion of the mighty pillars of belief, which are the choicest and most elevated part of religion. Moreover, those I mostly address are firstly my own soul, then the philosophers of Europe."[17]

He thus felt the need to explain that his ideas addressed not the government and ruling cliques, but the European philosophers, who were the people they had been influenced by. In this way he generalized those he opposed.

However much he said it was the philosophers of Europe that he was addressing, the authorities knew that he opposed both them and their policies. Similarly, we see that in this period the offences of which he was accused in various courts were generally focussed on political and social matters, like exploiting religion for political ends, opposing secularism, practising sufism, opposing the regime, forming a group or community, acting in opposition to the reforms, setting up a covert organization, and publishing material without permission. Always considering the treatment meted out to him by the government to be unjust, Said Nursi opposed it, and defended himself, saying:

> "It surely forms an excuse in the eyes of any fair-minded person, if someone who has been exiled unjustly and forced to reside in a remote village, under suveillance, in a place he is a stranger, has been made utterly sick of the world, and has been constantly harassed by being watched, does not know the law."[18]

Said Nursi vehemently opposed those who accused him of "making religion a tool of politics," and accusing them of "wanting to make politics a tool of irreligion," he tried to say that he was defending the sacred truths of belief against the philosophers of Europe, the atheists, and particularly those who exploited politics for irreligion and in meaning disturbed public order and security. In his defence speeches, he said that he considered the republican government to be "an Islamic government that would give no quarter to the current of irreligion, which causes harm to this country and nation."[19] With this, Said Nursi caught the government at its weakest point, for it was not possible for it to openly defend irreligion. So by saying that he was defending religion against irreligion and the philosophers of Europe, he wanted save himself from being the target of the government. It was not easy to oppose someone because they defended belief and opposed irreligion.

It was not a coincidence that Said Nursi dealt only with questions of belief in what he wrote. In his own words,

16. *Bediüzzaman Said Nursî Olayı*, 61.
17. *Tarihçe*, 231.
18. *Tarihçe*, 244.
19. *Tarihçe*, 251.

> "The Risale-i Nur does not discuss the broad sphere of religion which encompasses the laws of social life; its chief subject and aim is discussion of the mighty pillars of belief, which are the choicest and most elevated part of religion. Moreover, those I mostly address are firstly my own soul, then the philosophers of Europe."[20]

The reason he chose to concentrate in the conditions of that time on the question of faith, a more abstract and universal subject which was being seriously shaken by the Positivist-Materialist philosophy of the age, was on the one hand to avoid government repression, and on the other to oppose generally the basic problem of unbelief, which lies at the heart of all negative politics and their application. In any event, by making frequent references to Europe in his defences and in the Risale-i Nur, he was stating that it was the philosophers of Europe that he was addressing. His giving examples from Europe may be seen as his adopting a stand against the ideology of the republic, which was disposed to imitating it. While his making Europe the example in the following may be seen as a reasonable reply to a government tending to the West by someone who opposed it:

> "There is no government anywhere in the world of whatever form that would prohibit such a blessed product of its own country and unshakeable source of moral strength, and convict its author! The freedom of monks in Europe shows that no law bothers those who abandon the world and work on their own for the hereafter and belief."[21]

Said Nursi replied in various of his writings and defences to the accusations of being involved in politics, generally within the framework of being concerned with the questions of belief and the above quotes. As is seen from the following, his main aim was not politics but the questions of belief:

> "The Qur'an severely prohibits us from politics. For the Risale-i Nur's function is to serve the truths of belief and the Qur'an against absolute unbelief, which destroys eternal life and transforms even worldly life into a ghastly poison, through decisive and powerful proofs which bring even the most obdurate atheist philosophers to believe."[22]

Another matter he was accused of was Kurdish nationalism. However, Said Nursi said: "The bonds of nationalism may not be set up in place of the bonds of religion; if they are, there will be no justice; right will disappear."[23] And in his defence in Eskişehir Court in 1935 he adopted a very sharp tone when answering the accusation:

> "O atheistic tyrants who claim to be Turkists! Is it nationalism because, in your words, of a Kurd like me, to ruin on the most trivial and unimportant of pretexts this many people who may be sources of pride of the Turkish nation? Is it Turkism? Is it patriotism? Come on, I refer it your unfair consciences."[24]

It should not be forgotten that at the time this was said Turkish nationalism

20. *Tarihçe*, 231.
21. *Tarihçe*, 223-4.
22. *Tarihçe*, 557.
23. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Mektûbat*, 57.
24. *Tarihçe*, 230.

had been made a basic principle that dominated all official policies. On investigating what he wrote and did, it is seen how far he was from any nationalist cause, and that he also did not support Turkish nationalism. He opposed the nationalist factor of the official ideology as well.

Furthermore, like many opponents of the regime, opposition to secularism was another thing he was accused of, to which he replied:

> "I consider the meaning of secularism to be a government which is impartial; that is, just as in accordance with the principle of freedom of conscience it does not interfere with the irreligious and dissolute, so it does not interfere with the religiously-minded and pious."[25]

In saying this, he was stating that his understanding of secularism was close to the Western application of it. The following, which he said in his defence in Eskişehir Court, expresses opposition to the regime's understanding of secularism, and its application of it:

> "Those who rule the people in this blessed country, who are by nature religious, should surely support as a duty of government the practice of religion and encourage it. And since by principle the secular republic is impartial, and accordingly, does not interfere with the irreligious, certainly it should not interfere with the religious on whatever pretext."[26]

It is known that in the single party period, the application of secularism, and religious policies in general, were the object of extremely serious reactions by the people, and much repression was carried out in that connection. Said Nursi's opposing policies which had not met with acceptance by the people and had been contrary to their values, was an entirely normal situation for someone in the position of a social leader. He represented social opposition in this question too, and voiced the injustice and misapplications.

In reply to those who accused him of opposing the regime, he said:

> "Every government has opponents. On condition they do not infringe public security, no one can be held answerable for an idea, or method, they hold sincerely, in all conscience. This is a legal axiom. ... If relying on this fundamental principle of freedom of religion and conscience and hundreds of Qur'anic verses, I have opposed the corrupt part of civilization, and an absolute despotism that advances under the veil of freedom, and the severe repression of religion and those who practise it under the mask of secularism, can this be counted as an action contrary to the truth? No government at all can consider it a crime to oppose injustice, tyranny, and illegality, on the contrary, opposition is a licit and sincere element of the balance of justice."[27]

If noted carefully, it is seen that Said Nursi did not conceal that he opposed the government's policies and asserted that this was a natural right, and that no one can be held answerable for any thought that does not disturb public order and security. It is observed clearly that here too he was acting as spokesman and representative of a society which had been suppressed by authoritarian measures.

25. *Tarihçe*, 409.
26. *Tarihçe*, 219.
27. Işık, İhsan, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursî ve Nurculuk*, Istanbul, Ünlem Yayınları 1994, 224-5.

Said Nursi in the multi-party period: cautious approach to politics

The world system set up after the Second World War affected not only the foreign politics of countries, but their internal political structures as well. Since Turkey's choice in this structure was on the side of the Western bloc, it gave rise to the need to adjust its internal political regime to Western standards. For this reason, after the war, a transition was made from the authoritarian single party regime to the multi-party system, and a series of reforms were carried within that framework. A new period commenced with this development, which may be called a general liberalization, and with the Democrat Party winning the elections of 1950 and coming to power. The political and social developments and conditions following this demonstrated significant differences to the preceding period.

The liberalization subsequent to 1950 and the establishment of a government which showed respect for basic rights and freedoms, all affected Said Nursi's stand, and marked the start of a new period. Even though in this period too Said Nursi was sent from court to court, held under forced residence, unjustly sentenced to terms of imprisonment, and suffered oppression and persecution, relations between him and the ruling elite were relatively closer. In this period, Said Nursi appears as a leader of society who was closely concerned with political developments, who informed the government of his appreciation of some of their positive measures, wrote letters to the government leaders, and met with a number of ministers and deputies. He interpreted the feelings of society when he congratulated the Democrat Party government for its decision to permit the call to prayer to be made in its original Arabic, which was one of its first measures.[28] In a letter he wrote to Adnan Menderes, the Prime Minister of the time whom he described as a "champion of Islam," he advised him to strengthen "Islamic brotherhood and basic Islamic nationhood" and to protect the innocent. Saying that "holding official posts is in order to serve," he criticized its having been made a means to "domination and egotism." And explaining that the nationalism adopted up to that time was basically racialism, he recommended that they should give up the error and adopt Islamic nationhood.[29] The important point here is that having written no letter etc. of any sort to any government official during the single party period, Said Nursi wrote letters to the Prime Minister under the multi-party system. This should be seen as a sign of positive political participation and as a change in Said Nursi's attitude. Thus, his previous attitude of total opposition relatively softened and changed into approval of a number of measures.

The change in Said Nursi's attitude towards the government observed during this period was closely related to the tendencies of society in general. For the increasing social opposition to the policies of the single party period had come to power in 1950 elections and had taken over the government. The government and opposition had exchanged roles. A significant part of the opposition that

28. *Tarihçe*, 616.
29. *Tarihçe*, 618-22.

Said Nursi represented had come to power and had proposed a number of positive policies and measures. For example, an important development that may be mentioned was his making contact with Adnan Menderes through Dr. Tahsin Tola in connection with the official publishing of the Risale-i Nur, and his receiving a favourable reply from the Prime Minister. But although the Department of Religious Affairs was requested to do this, official publication of the Risale-i Nur was not possible, despite Menderes' wishes.[30]

Said Nursi, who previously had met with no politicians and statesmen, saw a number during this period, made various recommendations to them, and on his own initiative offered them advice and guidance. In a letter he wrote to his students dated 22nd February 1951, he said that Prime Minister Adnan Menderes and the Home Affairs Minister had sent him a message saying "He should not be anxious or despairing,"[31] showing that there must have been close relations between him and the government leaders. Similarly, it is known that in the course of a trip he made in 1958, the Education Minister and Assistant Prime Minister, Tevfik İleri, met with Said Nursi.[32]

Said Nursi's stand and activities in this period may be put into three categories: the first was his offering warnings and guidance to the Democrat Party on his own initiative; the second was his pointing out mistakes that were made from time to time; and the third was his commenting on certain events that occurred in Turkey and worldwide, and his offering solutions. For example, his wanting Aya Sophia to be reopened to worship, his attempts to have the Risale-i Nur published by the government, and his recommending the taking of decisive and bold steps in the questions of religion and belief all appear to be important. Also, his sending telegraphs of congratulation to Celâl Bayar and the government on the coming to power of the Democrat Party meant that he had given up having no relations with the government and his former stand of total opposition. In the piece entitled "To recall an important fact to the Democrats," he wrote: "Our way compelled us not to consider the world and politics as far as was possible, but now it has become necessary and we saw that in the face of the above two awesome currents, the Democrats could assist us, the Nurjus..."[33] showing that he considered it a necessity to be concerned with political matters.

Said Nursi, who began to concern himself with politics in cautious fashion, gave permission to his supporters to support the Democrat Party, although he did not take an active stand in the 1950 and 1954 elections. It was understood from his stand and activities after 1950 that he thought it necessary to support the Democrat Party. In the 1957 elections, however, Said Nursi showed openly that he supported the DP. His students too played a more active role than in the previous elections.[34] It became clear that when Bediuzzaman began to visit various

30. Badıllı, iii, 1488 ff.
31. Badıllı, iii, 1504.
32. Badıllı, iii, 1508.
33. Badıllı, iii, 1515.
34. Badıllı, iii, 1572-7.

towns following the elections that he had a large mass of followers in society and that they could easily give direction to developments. Said Nursi's opposing the Democrat government to a very measured extent, but on the whole supporting it and trying to give it direction, and his power steadily increasing, appears to have worried the party in power. It is striking that the police constantly bothered him because he did not wear a *şapka* (European-style headgear). Furthermore, the anti-government propaganda and incitement of the opposition press and Republican People's Party continued unabated. It is understood that the RPP was upset by Said Nursi's pro-DP stand. He was compelled to break off his visit to Ankara at the beginning of 1960 and leave the city because of the RPP's opposition to it.[35] While the treatment he received in Konya, where he went after Ankara, showed that the DP government too had withdrawn support for him and was perturbed by his trips. It is known that after his Konya trip he said: "Adnan Menderes is worth only a tin can in my view now,"[36] which illustrates his disappointment and loss of confidence in him. It is understood that the DP government was anxious at Said Nursi's popularity and that it took steps against this by forbidding him to enter Ankara when he wanted to visit it for the last time on 11th January 1960. The government informed Said Nursi that he had to reside in Emirdağ and the police prevented him entering Ankara.

It may be said that during the time of the Democrat government, Said Nursi did not oppose the government altogether as he had previously, that he wrote letters to the party leaders, supported their positive measures, permitted his followers to vote for the DP in elections, that he supported this party openly in the 1957 elections and opposed the RPP, and that after these elections the government was disturbed by his gradually increasing power and took steps to control it, but that nevertheless he did not oppose the government as formerly.

When Said Nursi died in the hotel in which he was staying in Urfa on 23th March 1960, the people lost a powerful voice and effective representative of social opposition. It may be said that the most important factors shaping his colourful and active life were the changes in politics and government. Said Nursi dedicated his life to combatting injustice, disbelief, irreligion, and atheism, and today his influence persists in the field of opposition to positivism, materialism, and irreligion.

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35. Badıllı, iii, 1613 ff.
36. Badıllı, iii, 1626.

Print-Based Islamic Discourse and Modernity: The *Nur* Movement*

M. Hakan Yavuz

I heard a story on my last visit to Turkey that I think appropriate for this paper. Ali, a boy of some naivety, was sent to study in a two-year teachers' college in Ankara. He became a new Nurcu, a follower of Said Nursi, and spent two years in one of the Nurcu-run dormitories, known as dershanes. After graduation, he returned to visit his mother in his native village. Ali tells his mother, who is in her 50's, "Mother, I can prove to you the existence of God with ninety-nine evidences from the writings of Said Nursi." His mother turns around and says: "Ali! You had ninety-nine doubts in your mind about God and now, thanks to God, you have got rid of the doubt. I don't need proof to believe in God." This story, of course, may not fully answer the question posed by Zeki Velidi Toğan, a prominent scholar of Turkish history, when he asked: "What are the reasons that make Turkish intellectuals follow a Kurdish seyh from a small village?"[1] Ali's story is nonetheless significant.

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* Original English text.

1. See Zeki Velidi Toğan's short note on Said Nursi and Nurculuk which is added to Yaşar Kutluay, "Mezhepler Tarihi Yönünden Said Nursi ve Nurculuk," *İslâm Tahkikleri Enstitüsü Dergisi* Vol 3, No. 3-4 (1966), 211-225; Toğan's note pp. 225-6. Kutluay's article is very critical of Said Nursi and selectively uses Said's writing. See more critical literature on Said Nursi by İlhami Soysal, "Demokratların Azdırdığı Nurculuk," *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi* Vol. 5, (1992); see also Soysal review with the editor of *Köprü* magazine "Ne dediler?" *Köprü* No. 49 (1995), 76-78.

First, the story postures reason or faith as a result of being in urban or rural environments. Indeed, within urban environments, scepticism is dominant, and as a result one needs a proof to believe in God. Rural areas, on the other hand, are secure with foundations of faith and never doubted. Secondly, the story conveys that the new literate masses of Turkey are lured by the Nurcu movement due to its connection with the printed word and a new idiom. Thirdly, this story presupposes that the shared map of meaning in Turkish society has been either rooted in Islam or legitimated by Islam. The story shyishly addresses that as individuals, everyday practices and interactions are made meaningful within the framework of this map of meanings. Additionally, the story poses the question of uncertainty and trust in a modern environment. Therefore, Islamically perceived practices, in Turkish society, provide a sense of direction to day-to-day life. Said Nursi's writings seek to create a conceptual bridge between society and Islam.

In this paper, I do not seek to examine the transformation of religious discourse. Instead, by focussing on the Islamic thinker Said Nursi and his movement, I explore the reciprocal relationship between Islam and the Turkish polity, which created new discursive spaces to articulate political identities and shape the cultural character of the state.[2] Social and political transformations induced Said Nursi to protect and revise an existing cluster of meanings by reimagining the role of Islam in society. Mass migration from rural areas, expansion of public education, and the centralization of the state created an environment for societal groups to respond and shape this transformation. Said Nursi, for example, invented his own "idiom," i.e., conceptual practices that enable Muslims to classify their experiences, and the rules that govern the relations of the members of a community. Said Nursi's message was a response to the expanding and transforming power of capitalist relations and the deepening anomie. These two conditions provided a necessary social ground for the formation of Said Nursi's ideas. When these conditions coalesced with the ideas of Said within textual form, the Nur movement began to evolve into a socio-political movement.

Said Nursi offer imaginative tools and strategies for Muslim agents to respond to the challenges of the day. He accomplishes this by reinterpreting the existing cultural clusters to create a shared understanding of politics, money, grace, education, and family.

The Nurcu groups, which are the most powerful and effective socio-political group in modern Turkey, have evolved around the writings of Said Nursi (1873-1960), and his *magnum opus* Risale-i Nur Külliyatı (The Treatise of Light).[3] His work has marked the Islamic political discourse, offering new ideas for society

2. For the best study on Nurculuk see Şerif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (New York: State University of New York, 1989); see for the review of the book in *Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* Vol. 12, No. I (January 1991), 229-32; see also Mardin's essay on "Nurculuk" in *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Modern Islamic World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 255-6. In this essay, Mardin stresses Said Nursi's struggle to "take up the defence of his kin" (Kurds).

3. Said Nursi wrote his books in Arabic and Turkish: *İşaratü'l-İ'caz, el-Mesnevi el-Arabi, Sayku'l-Islam, Talikat fi'l-Mantik, el-Hutbetu'ş-Şamiye, Kızıl İcaz ala Sullem,* **(Cont. overleaf)**

to come to terms with modern socio-cultural challenges and its political implications. By studying the Nurcu community, one can understand the dynamics of this community in relation to the state. This is especially achieved through the examination of different layers of society and processes of social formation. The Nurcu group's dynamism as a social movement is illustrated in networks of media, education, business, and set of publishing houses. Moreover, this is the first and only text-based movement in Turkey. The books around which the movement has been built have brought a new idiom of communication and a new message to political society. Because texts are the basis of the movement, Nurcu groups have necessarily involved themselves in publishing and printing processes.

This paper consists of four sections. I first seek to examine the significance of the Nurcu movement in understanding the transformation of society and its implication on the state. I will argue that the Nurcu movement, the first and only text-based movement, has played a key role in Turkey's transition from an oral culture to a print culture. As a result of this emphasis on print culture within an oral-culture dominated society, it has 'consciousness-building' and pluralizing effect. The Nurcu novement became a mainstream social movement as a result of conscious intervention of Nurcus who could be identified as petty bourgeoisie. The Nurcus seek to restrict state power by reproducing alternative inner societal terrains. The Nur movement seeks to create its own image of the "good life" by referring to Islamic concepts.

In the second part of the paper I will begin by examining the differences between "Old," "Transitional," and "New Said," which represent the change and continuity in his idiom. I will, then, analyze the formation and dissemination of his ideas and its effects on politics. I hope to demonstrate how this movement has created an inner society by withdrawing and creating an inner space and eventually leading to the formation of a textual community. Indeed, I will indicate how this inner society became externalized. In the third section, after illustrating the text-based idiom of Said, I will examine the reasons for the fragmentation and transformation of the Nur movement between 1980 and 1994. Said adopted a different path than other state-oriented ulema. He did not see the control of the state arena as a sufficient ground for the establishment of a just Muslim society. However, socio-political developments in modern Turkey have transformed this "Nurcu" character. This "new" Nurcu character does not excite fear but rather admiration. Moreover, its growing number made "new" Nurcu a

(3. Cont.) in Arabic; *Nokta, Şuaat, Sünuhat, Muhâkemat, Rumuz, Tuluat, İşarat, Hutuvat-ı Sitte, Lemeat, Münâzarat, Divan-ı Harb-i Örfî, Sözler, Mektûbat, Lem'alar, Şualar*, in Turkish. Risale-i Nur Külliyatı was printed by several publication houses. The most prominent ones are: Yeni Asya Neşriyat, Tenvir Neşriyat (this is a very radical publishing house), Sözler Yayınevi (this is the oldest and some books have reached 21 editions), İhlas, which produces all works of Said Nursi. The Sözler publishes 14 of Said's works. In recent years, some publishing houses started to print commentaries on Said's works. İsmail Mutlu has produced a series of short commentaries which are very repetitious and short in analysis. In my interview, the director of Sözler Yayınevi told me that profit is used for the distribution of books. He also indicated that most readers are students and the major period of publication took place in the 1980's. In the years of the military coup 1980-1983, he said they had the best years.

giant and source of fear in some, and a power for politicians and leaders. This new character of "new Nurcu" stresses *ethno*-religious loyalties and negates "self" for collective consciousness. This new character of "new Nurculuk" sprang from changing social and political conditions of modern Turkey. "New" Nurculuk presented itself in the case of Fethullah Gülen-led "textual and visual community."

Finally, I will concentrate on Fethullah Gülen and his clientele, to indicate the constant change of the Islamic discourse in a state of flux and its role in shaping the state. I shall demonstrate how social movements produce society by using diverse cultural artifacts. The Nurcu movement reimagines Islamic political identity as a framework to make sense of events and sets communal boundaries with the aim of carving a space for political voices outside the control of the state.

I

The Method of Diffusion and Interpretations of the Risale-i Nur Külliyatı

This section will indicate the role of print in the formation and diffusion of ideas in the case of the Nurcu movement. This illustrates how ideas are constructed by intellectuals and communicated to the masses. The construction, transmission and reception of these ideas are punctuated by a socio-cultural context. This section will also indicate: how innovation in religious ideas takes place; how the organs are disseminated to different populations; and how ideas, in this instance, turned into a social movement. The formation and reformation of the Turkish Islamic discourse is shaped by the forces of democratization, mass education, and economic development.

Islamists, such as Nurcu, believe that knowledge is discovered rather than constructed. They do not agree that knowledge is constructed and reconstructed, over and over again, as human horizons expand. Although Said Nursi constructed the experiential world in which he lived, the Nurcu believe that his knowledge is not acquired but rather bestowed by God. In fact however Nursi constructed his experiential world by imposing religious meanings and articulating regularities as the sign of God. I will argue that the experiential world in which said Nursi lived was constructed as a result of his cognitive abilities to distinguish and relate nature and society. For a Nurcu, to know is to discover the power of God. Its epistemological framework intermingles with metaphysics. Therefore, thinking is not freed from religious influence. The Nurcus argue that Said Nursi expresses the truths by invoking analogies to make them comprehensible.[4]

4. Ali Mermer presents the characteristics of the Risale-i Nur according to Nurcus, *Aspects of Religious Identity: Nurcu Movement in Turkey Today* (unpublished Ph. D. thesis, 1985), pp. 388-390.

Said Nursi's books are written in narrative form. Knowledge about the creator and created is embedded in these narratives. In the process of Islamization, this new genre of literature has played a key role by becoming a discursive space for the formation and dissemination of ideas.[5] For example, Erdem Beyazit, a prominent Islamist poet and former parliamentarian, said:

> "Muslims need to write and write more. Only through writing can we raise people's consciousness. Moreover, through writing and reading, we help to expand the Muslims' horizons. Said Nursi's Risale-i Nur Külliyatı did just that. Literature can help us to consolidate and increase our Islamic consciousness. Our existence and conditions can only be expressed and examined by writing. If you examine the first three decades of our Republic, you will see that there is an alternative *persona* in relation to the secular nationalist one. You will see this in the writing of Said Nursi and Sezai Karakoç."[6]

The Nur movement has played a key role in the transition from an oral to a printed culture. This printed culture consequently has formed a dynamic and more democratic culture in modern Turkey. A printed culture demonstrates that communities can be revived and perpetuated if society is constituted by conscious actors. Said Nursi did not see the state as a way of forming a Muslim society, but first aimed to invent conscious individuals from what he viewed as a *tabula rasa*. Without a conscious society, Nurcus believed that there could not be a just polity.

The Reason for Its Diffusion and Success

During the Republican period, three new Islamic groups emerged: the Nurcu, Süleymancı, and Işıkçı. The Nurcu movement set itself apart from others by stressing the text — Risale-i Nur Külliyatı, and having the largest and most influential pseudo-political community.

Şerif Mardin explains this Nurcu strength in terms of filling the following social gap: that the reforms of the Tanzimat and the Republic were undermining personal allegiances and replacing them with Western contractual ties. Said tried to repersonalize Turkish society by reviving Islamic shared understandings through the Risale-i Nur Külliyatı.[7] Mardin argues that the strength of the Nur movement is also a result of the "Republican failures," to develop a comprehensive world-view and the need for a shared language among the lower classes.[8]

Mardin is on point, however, it is not so much that the Nurcu movement gained from the failures of the Republican regime, but that the movement found

5. Literacy has been the key in the formation of Islamic political consciousness. Hekimoğlu İsmail (Ömer Okçu), *Minyeli Abdullah*; Fahreddin Can, *Kızım Ayşe* (Istanbul: Hisar Yayınları); Raif Cilasun, *Oğlum Osman* (İstanbul: Hisar Yayınları); Hüseyin Karatay, *Sürgün Öğretmen* (Istanbul: Hisar Yayınları); Ahmed Günbay, *Yanık Buğdaylar;* idem, *Çiçekler Susayınca*; Emine Şenlikoğlu, *Bize Nasıl Kıydınız*, Şule Yüksel, *Huzur Sokağı*. See Şerif Mardin, "Cultural Change and the Intellectual: A Study of the Effects of Secularization in Modern Turkey: Necip Fazıl and the Nakşibendi," in *Cultural Transitions in the Middle East* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1994), pp. 189-213.

6. Interview with Erdem Beyazit in his home on 7 September 1994.

7. Şerif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change*, 12.

8. Ibid., 25, 157, 227.

gains from both the positive and negative dimensions of Kemalism. Indeed, at times the Nur movement derived its strength from the failures of the Kemalist reforms, but the successes of the Kemalist reforms also resulted in the Nur movement's strength. Expansion of communication, universal education, centralization of law, and rise of sceptic elites are the products of the Kemalist reforms. A distinction between the positive and negative results of Kemalism, thus fractures our discussion because an analysis of the Nurcu movement involves a self-preserving dialogue within its internal and external boundaries. For example, the Nur movement was first disseminated in the Western provinces of Anatolia because the literacy rate was higher there and individuals thus had more room for understanding Nurcu than in the Eastern provinces, where şeyh or ağa dominated daily life. The breeding ground for the diffusion of the Nur movement still dominates in the Western provinces.

Moreover, the reasons which made the ideas of Said Nursi appealing in the 1950's are different from those reasons which turned it into the most influential socio-political movement in the 1980's. As modernity expanded, individual horizons and their needs for a symbolic structure and religion were transformed. The urban environment breeds scepticism and religion becomes a form of identity and a network system to cope with the urban problems. The rapid mobilization of rural populations to urban centres as a result of expanding capitalist conditions necessitated a new religious idiom and this was developed by Said Nursi. Said's project involved a change within tradition and this appealed to traditional mobilized masses in the urban centres. As social life changes and human horizons expand by integrating the unknown to the realm of known, so does individual understanding of religion and the needs for spirituality. The Nur movement should be seen as a response to the expansion of print and abstract knowledge in modern Turkey rather than as a response to failed projects of Mustafa Kemal. By saying this, I do not mean that the Kemalist reforms all succeeded or the Nur movement was isolated from the project of modernization. As modernization was affecting every aspect of social life in the periphery and disintegrating established formal ties, individuals were seeking for a new, but accustomed, discourse to cope with these changes. Said Nursi's idiom provided just that.

With its textual characteristics the Nur movement gave an opportunity to those who moved from rural areas to urban centres to construct their conception of Islam in this sceptic age. Islam has been secularized by these groups to make secular functions of nature and life more religious. As market economies and means of communication create more private spaces for Muslims, these new spaces are used to articulate Islamic political identities through new waves of Islamic pop music, feminist journals, Islamic movies, fashionable clothes, exclusive restaurants, café houses, and shopping malls. To make these secular places religious, Islam has been secularized through consumer patterns and with the logic of capitalism. Islamic activity in the Turkish case has been turned into a purposive enterprise, i.e., an instrument to create a regional power and a conceptual map to define goals.

This is the first text-centred Islamic movement in modern Turkey. Said openly argues that "this is not the age of the tarikat."[9] The printed word becomes a vehicle for the formation of Nurcu consciousness. Another main feature of the Nurcu movement is that it stresses reason rather than heart. It does not seek miracles (keramet) but rather emphasizes reasoning and self-examination. Said seeks to subordinate the heart, the manifestation of faith proper and the strength of traditional Islam, with reason. Said argues that before, it was possible to learn Islam through rigid imitations but it is not anymore. His anti-fideism recognizes that in an age of scepticism, there is a need for a new methodology to get people to believe in the existence of God. Said's target population was urban and literate people, because scepticism, for Said, is dominant in these areas and the future cultural forms would be produced in urban centres.

He stressed the importance of 'evidence' or natural theology to get educated people to believe in God.[10] The goal is to prove the existence of God at the individual level. According to Said, the source of atheism shifted from ignorance in the past to the lack of scientific knowledge. By scientific knowledge Said means a search for regularities in nature as proof of God. Through the laws of nature, Said seeks to consolidate that reason requires us to recognize God. The Nur movement cultivates a new form of consciousness, deep anti-fideism, by using the means of science and technology to prove that there is God.

Moreover, Islamic knowledge is not transmitted through abstract and axiomatic, i.e. analytical form, but rather through narratives. Said realized the fact that Muslims can only renew their thinking through writing and reading. This movement has four main consequences in modern Turkey: (1) it facilitated traditional ulema to lose their power since this new form of transmission of knowledge was introduced; (2) it forced ulema to become journalists and writers to communicate with the people (e.g. Hayreddin Karaman); (3) print-based discourse challenged hegemonic voices and offered a public space for dissent; therefore it is emancipatory; and (4) it made conscious intervention of actors and, thus, Islam germane to the economic and social transformation of Turkey.

To understand Said's intellectual contribution in shaping the conceptual map of Turkish society, his contribution needs to be placed in context and examined in relation to the prevailing hegemonic state discourse, known as Kemalism. This allows a view of Said Nursi's continous struggle to adapt to changing conditions of his society. By reading his work, readers are met with the teleological overhanging of his argument. Moreover, there is a strategically eclectic quality to Said Nursi himself. However, no one has established the method of reading and interpreting Said Nursi in the modern context. How should we read the

9. *Mektûbat*, 428; *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 202.

10. Although Said criticizes the utility of personal miracles (keramet) in explaining faith, his followers believe that he had divine qualities to demonstrate some miracles. These commonly cited miracles are "his ability to walk on water in Russia, he managed to go to a mosque even though he was not allowed out by jail guardians, people see him inside the mosques, another miracle is that when one of his student approach to kiss his ring, he managed to move them to his second hand." These miracles are often cited by adherents.

books of Said Nursi? How far can we separate Said, as author, from his writings? Moreover, what do Said's writings mean in the current context? Why and how do particular interpretations of Said vary from one clientele group to another? Why did his followers reinvent an oral method of communicating his ideas?

My personal experience within interpretive circles or textual-communities evolved around dershane, individuals tend to subordinate the message of the text to its author's life story. Said's personal biography becomes a context within which the text is read. My question is: Did Said achieve his goals? (1) to cultivate the inner life and to prevent the penetration of modern scepticism and materialistic ideologies; (2) to move society from an oral culture to a print culture and create a shared map of concepts to connect the centre and the periphery of Turkish society; and (3) to place the Qur'an at the centre of social interactions and adapt to modern changes by reviving the shared Islamic clusters.

II

To understand the shift of emphasis in his works, one needs to see the difference between Old and New Said.[11] New Said is the older Said who became more oriented toward an examination of his inner dimension. The connection between the text and author can be made by placing them into prevailing discourses in that period. However, Said's followers read the books to answer present questions. Therefore, Said's message is reproduced within the challenges of the present time. This recoding of the narrative of Said Nursi takes place either in interpretive circles or in commentary books. Since mass production of books decontextualizes knowledge, the reading or listening audience tends to give new meanings to what they read or listen in terms of their day-to-day activities. The reader, as an agent, does not internalize whatever he or she reads. There is a complex process of recoding messages through which internalization takes place.

Due to the profound transformation of the state-society relations in the last three decades, the meaning and intentions of the Nur movement have also changed. The Nurcu movement evolved in relation to changing social, economic and political conditions of Turkish society. Said's main goal was to reinvent rather than preserve the society and the polity by constructing a new sense of consciousness. This consciousness was to be based on a new idiom to guide individual interactions and eventually reproduce the society. Like other Islamist thinkers, Said realized the need for a new idiom or map of meaing. Said not only recognized this need but took careful steps to realize it.

Said argued that by replacing faith by imitation (taklidi iman) with faith by certainty (tahkiki iman), Muslims would be able to resist the forces of scepti-

11. See for a general examination of Nurculuk by İhsan Işık, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursî ve Nurculuk* (Istanbul: Ünlem Yayınları, 1990); Mustafa Karacoşkun, *Nurcu Cemaatına Mensup Kişilerin Dinî Düşünce Duygu ve Davranışları*, Marmara Üniversitesi Unpublished MA thesis, 1991.

cism, namely materialism and communism. This search for certainty through science has limited his influence to certain segments of the population who have maintained their belief. Most of Said's followers have pious family backgrounds and his writings are puissant in these culturally traditional circles. Closer examination of Said's writings and his modern followers indicate that to become a Nurcu, you need to perform imitation and submission.[12] Even in his hierarchical categorizations of understandings Said starts with itikad, a degree of submission by imitation. He then moves from itikad to iltizam, i'zan, tasdik, taakkul, tasavvur, and finally hayel, which is the highest form of understanding.[13] Because of this assumption of itikad, it is questionable how far the Risale-i Nur Külliyatı could reinstate faith where minds have already been shaped by scepticism.

The changes in the Nurcu idiom are evident in Said's response to the changing context.[14] Said himself divided his life into the period of "Old Said" and the "New Said." However, heterogeneity in Said's discourse indicate three different periods: Old Said (1873-1913); Wanderer Said (1913-1926); and New Said (1926-1960).

I. Old Said (1873-1913): Revolutionary Period

Said Nursi was born in 1873 in the village of Nurs in Bitlis province in eastern Anatolia. He was first educated by the oldest brother Molla Abdullah and then educated himself by participating in sufi gatherings. Although Said Nursi was ambiguous about the role of tarikat to revitalize Islam and the rigid relationship between the şeyh and his followers, his thinking and argumentation are very much influenced by the sufism of Anatolia.[15] Said himself expresses the cultural dominance of Nakşibendi in this cultural environmemnt.[16] Said did not only develop working connections with the prominent Nakşi şeyhs, but he read the works of Ahmad Sirhindi in 1918, when Istanbul was under British occupation. This influenced the evolution of a new Said.[17] According to Şerif Mardin, "during the 19th century new opportunities for the expansion of the Nakşibendi proselytizing activities seem to have opened up in the Ottoman Empire."[18] Mardin treats Said Nursi as offspring of Nakşibendi activism in Anatolia.[19] Although

12. See critical readings of Said's goals and their limitation in Hamid Algar, "Said Nursi and the Risale-i Nur: An Aspect of Islam in Contemporary Turkey," in *Islamic Perspectives* (Jeddah: Saudi Publishing House, 1979), 327-8.

13. Said Nursî, *Münâzarat*, 11.

14. Some Nurcus sought to create an homogenous Nur philosophy, see Safa Mürsel, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursî ve Devlet Felsefesi* (Istanbul: Yeni Asya Yayınları, 1980); Necmeddin Şahiner, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursî ve Nurculuk* (Istanbul: 1979).

15. Seyfi Say, "Bediüzzaman Said Nursî ve Tasavvuf," in *Büyük İslâm ve Tasavvuf Önderleri* (Istanbul: Vefa Yayıncılık, 1993), 487-97; Cemal Kutay, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursî* (Istanbul: Yeni Asya Yayınları, 1980), 103, 147-9, 381.

16. Said Nursî, *Emirdağ Lahikası*, i, 53; *Sikke-i Tasdik-i Gaybî*, 116; Abdullah Badıllı, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursî—Mufassal Tarihçe-i Hayatı* (Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 1990), 102.

17. Said explains how he read Imam Rabbani's *Mektûbat* and a letter which was addressing someone with the name of Bediuzzaman. See more about his method of reading *Mektûbat* in *Mektûbat*, 388-9.

18. Şerif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change*, 24, 29; history of the Nakşibendi, 54-60; on the expansion of the Nakşibendi in the 19th century, 126, 149-50.

19. Ibid., 230.

Said was educated by Nakşibendi şeyhs, his thinking cannot be reduced to the Nakşibendi tradition.[20] Indeed, there are profound Nakşibendi marks on his thinking but they represent a break rather than a continuity. Mardin's Said Nursi becomes a product of religious activism of Anatolia. This overcontextualization of Said Nursi's thought ignores his attempt to break the old patterns.

His close connections with government officials allowed him to follow the media and this, in turn, made him aware of European prejudices about Islam and he came to realize the weaknesses of his own society. His thinking developed during the confrontation between European-based critical thinking and the imitative thinking of Ottoman society. He did not reject European ideas outright but rather sought to develop critical thinking within an Islamic-Ottoman tradition. He realized the need to develop a new idiom in the age of scepticism and materialism. Said's writings reflect a dialogic style, his writing develops as an answer to hypothetical or real questions that face Muslim individuals. His allegorical form of argumentation allow interpretive room for readers to read into the narrative.

Since the Ottoman state legitimated itself in terms of Islamic practices, Said always presumed the masses to be conscientious Muslims. He never doubted the religious faith of Muslims. He was actively engaged in political and cultural life against the absolutism of Sultan Abdülhamid II. He embraced the İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti (Society of Union and Progress) and the establishment of a constitutional state. His activism had aimed to strengthen Islam and this, in turn, would have consolidated the state. The Old Said believed in power of the people and hoped to save the state through strengthening the Shari'a, which was perceived as the rule of law. Said emphasized Shari'a more than state power. Religion, for Said, was the necessary and sufficient condition for the powerful Ottoman state; whereas, Abdülhamid II stressed the state as the ultimate goal. Although both Abdülhamid II and Said perceived Islam as a necessary ideology to consolidate the society and mobilize it for the well-being of the state, Abdülhamid II's main goal was the state not the society. This ideological conflict became the source of tension between Abdülhamid II and Said Nursi. Said defended a new education system known as the Medresetü'z-Zehra project that was presented to Sultan Abdülhamid II.[21]

By witnessing the oppressive policies of the Society of Union and Progress after the 1908 coup, Said contributed essays to Volkan, a militant paper of İttihad-ı Muhammedî, and sharply criticized the policies of the government. This newspaper argued that the disintegration of the Ottoman state could only be prevented if the Shari'a was fully implemented. As the oppressive policies of the Society of Union and Progress became evident, a revolt took place under the leadership of Şeyh Vahdeti, the head of the İttihad-ı Muhammedî. They demanded the implementation of the Shari'a in April 1909. This demand was brutally suppressed and many people were hanged.

20. Ibid., 68.

21. Said Nursî, *Emirdağ Lahikası*, ii, 196; Halit Ertuğrul, *Eğitimde Bediüzzaman Modeli* (Istanbul: Yeni Asya Yayınları, 1994), 115-148.

Said struggled for freedom and constitutionalism by sharply criticizing Abdülhamid II's oppressive policies in the name of "Islam" and the nationalism of the Society of Union and Progress. He delivered a famous speech in Salonika and argued for a constitutionalism invoking Islamic principles. In this period, Said was more concerned with practical issues and sought to demonstrate the compatibility between Islam and constitutionalism. He did not try to prove the existence of God because he assumed that his readers were faithful Muslims and the state was shaped by Islamic law. He was an activist who sought to mobilize the masses for constitutionalism within the framework of Islam. He always remained optimistic about the future of Islam and the development of Muslim consciousness. This optimism was expressed in his speech at the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus and in his exchange with a Russian official when he was a war prisoner.[22]

II. Transitional Said (1918-1926): Scepticism

In this period, Said Nursi still believed that the state was the main instrument to educate people and revitalize Islam. After the 1925 reforms, Said searched for a new alternative. He saw the result of the Kemalist reforms and their ability to doubt the foundations of faith. He concluded that the realization of Islamic consciousness had to be carried out by individuals not by the state. Moreover, he observed that Muslims were incapable of protecting their faith against the dark forces of scepticism. After the Kurdish Rebellion led by a Nakshibendi şeyh, Said, in 1925, Said Nursi claimed that the state had fallen into the hands of dark forces of scepticism, and faith by imitation could not withstand this anti-Islamism. He shifted his attention to inner dimensions of individuals to form a deeply rooted consciousness. He decided to do this by educating human senses in terms of Islamic consciousness. He constantly evoked the phenomenal world to demonstrate faith by certainty.

III. The New Said (1926-1960): Turned Outside In[23]

New Said lived in a distinct political context in which Mustafa Kemal was carrying out his civilizing policies by breaking away from traditional practices and institutions. Since Mustafa Kemal's ultimate ambition was to construct a 'national' society, Said struggled to create an alternative inner community, which is articulated in the household and formed in terms of face-to-face relations without having any outward manifestation in political space. In a way, this was a shift from the outward activism of Old Said to a withdrawal into the shell of Islam. He managed to carve out an inner space by invoking Islamic practices to free individuals from the consequences of the Republican reforms. By creating a religious consciousness which is not outwardly manifested, Said was

22. This speech, known as *hutbe*, was published in Turkish *Hutbe-i Şamiye*.

23. Said died in Urfa. He wanted to go to Urfa, where different ethnic groups —Turks, Kurds, and Arabs— live together. He made a taxi cover up its licence and they drew from Kastamonu, Konya to Urfa. After arriving in Urfa, he passed away within two days, on 23 March 1960. He left a clock and two mantles, and 20 TL. Necmeddin Şahiner, *Bilinmeyen Taraflarıyla Bediüzzaman Said Nursî* (Istanbul: Yeni Asya Yayınları), 406.

seeking to prevent the internalization of the Republican reforms that created a sceptical society. Said defined freedom in terms of his project of creating an inner community. He argued that the government can only ask questions if an individual who actively breaks the law with his "'hands,' the government cannot interfere in the household, heart and private matters,"[24] Muslims, for Said, should have absolute freedom in the spheres of household, heart, and private matters. Said wanted Muslims to turn inward and form an inner community within these three realms.

Said Nursi did not spend time discussing the outward manifestation of Islam in law, politics, state or in dress codes, but rather within inner roots of faith. He and his followers do not centre debate on "Islamic state," "Islamic revolution," or "Islamic criminal law."[25] Risale-i Nur Külliyatı aims to personalize the individual by rooting this individual into an Islamic cosmology and then stress the relationship between persons and God. Said discusses the role of faith in the formation of the person and a just society in his books. Said compares social, political and cultural implications of a faithful society and a faithless society. He argues that all good virtues —justice, peace, honesty, integrity, and love— emanate from faith; whereas anarchy, egoism, oppression and poverty are all the outcome of the lack of faith. Faith, therefore for Said, is the root of persons, and the source of knowledge on the phenomenal world. Faith, for Nurcu, signifies social practices which are conceptualized by Islamic idioms. Faith signifies personalized relations and a community.

Inner community and expansion of Sufi influence

After his visit to Ankara in 1923, Said came to the conclusion that faith was at risk and it could only be freed from scepticism by enriching the inner life. He moved to seclusion in Van and this was interrupted by government exile to Burdur. The government accused him of involvement in a rebellion which was led by a Nakşibendi şeyh, Said, in 1925. Said was exiled from one place to another and kept under strict repression.[26] He was constantly humiliated in front of his followers and students. He was identified as a 'disease' by the Republican regime and declared a threat to the security of the state.[27] Said never gave up his

24. Bediüzzaman Said Nursî, *Tarihçe-i Hayat*, 169.

25. See the following special issue on *Din ve Siyaset* (religion and politics). By religion, it means the opinion of Said Nursi about politics in *Köprü*, Vol. 50 (1995); also see another special issue on laicism and secularism in *Köprü* No. 51 (1995).

26. Some journalists and scholars took the state's charges a proof and presented Said Nursi as a Kurdish nationalist. For example, A. E. Yalman argues that Büyük Doğu, Milliyetçiler Derneği, and Nurculuk are pro-communist organizations and he claims that Said Nursi was "an old agitator for Kurdish separatism who became known by the name of Said Kurdi." in Ahmed Emin Yalman, *Turkey in My Time* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), 250. Muzaffer Sencer presents Said Nursi's address to "Turks and Kurds" as divisive and a sign of Kurdish ethnonationalism. See Muzaffer Sencer, *Dinin Türk Toplumundaki Etkileri* (Istanbul: Garanti Matbaası, 1968), 156-7.

27. Said was exiled to Burdur and he wrote *Nur'un İlk Kapıları* here. In 1934, he was brought to trial and charged with seeking to establish a secret religious society to destroy the Republican regime in Eskişehir. He was sentenced to six months prison on the basis of "exploiting Islam for political purposes." After his release he moved to Kastamonu. During this period his writings were massively mimeographed by his followers and distributed throughout the country. **(Cont. overleaf)**

writings. He aimed to raise Muslim consciousness about God and desired to protect individuals from outside ideologies. After the 1925 rebellion, his writing exhibited more sufi characteristics. Said carefully carved out a new inner space in which to shape individual consciousness in terms of Islamic concepts. This was a period of closing off from the outward exhibition of faith and invention of a new internal spiritual space where consciousness was realized. Said asked his followers not to openly resist the reforms of the state but to create their inner self beyond the reach of these reforms and protect it from intervention by the state. Said Nursi wanted Muslims to reclaim their life by cultivating their inner dimension. The centralizing and secularizing policies of Mustafa Kemal led to an opposition which breathed life into religion in Turkish society. In reaction to the state policies, Islam turned into an oppositional ideology to challenge the state.

Said's message did not seek abrupt transformation of the socio-political system, but rather it sought to create a newly conscious society. There is a separate Nur identity which is shaped by the Risale-i Nur Külliyatı and separate from other Islamic movements in modern Turkey. At the individual level, Nur identity offers a conceptual framework to grasp social interactions. At the communal level, this identity functions as a boundary in relation to other groups.

After 1960, the Saidian inner community transformed into a series of "textual communities" spread across Turkey. If Said Nursi's ideas gave meaning to Nurcu life, it was their organizational strategies that provided them with institutional resources and this, in turn, gave momentum to the Nur movement. Said Nursi's readers and followers constitute "textual-communities" by getting together to read and interpret his texts. As a result of sharing the same texts, they develop a separate language and cognitive abilites and this sets apart Nurcus from other Islamic groups in Turkey. The main function of the textual-communities is to listen, reflect upon the texts, and disseminate their meaning to society. The Risale-i Nur Külliyatı which is treated as knowledge bestowed by God, once read, created shared attitudes toward the phenomenal world and social interactions.

An open door policy in the dershane and assembling once a week facilitated the dissemination of Said's ideas. Gathering together to read Said Nursi's books created the institution of the dershane. Dershanes are not only centres for reading Said's works, but also a place to reaffirm Islamic identity and exchange opinions on political issues. Through the dershane structure the Nurcu discourse is given concrete expression. The Nurcu practice of conversation therefore became an instrument for building religiously based social networks, and a way of communicating the strength of these networks. The dershane has become an economic and political network for those upwardly mobilized segments of the middle classes to establish "trust" and "connections" to compete in a competitive

(27. Cont.) As his influence expanded, the government became nervous and he was brought to trial in 1943. The trial took place in Denizli and he was acquitted. He was forced to residence in Emirdağ-Afyon. He was charged again in 1947 and brought to trial in Afyon. He was acquitted by the Higher Court in 1949, but the Lower Court brought new charges right away in 1949.

economy. Trust has been the main social product of these dershanes to overcome the problem of uncertainty.[28]

Dershanes in modern Turkish society became associations of a religiously shaped civil society. These informal networks are autonomous from the state. They voice certain collective interests and organize in educational and other areas to shape public opinion.

Although the Nur movement was a textual movement, it also used traditional network systems to disseminate its ideas. For example, respect to Said Nursi's ideas increased, as respected seyhs such as Dedepaşa Baştürk of Bayburt praised him as a mujaddid. In Erzurum and Bayburt, where the Nur movement have been very powerful, 'abi' or 'hocaefendi' play a key role. Another reason for the popularization of the Nur movement in these two conservative provinces have been the dominance of a vernacular language. Arabic language in this region is not as common as in south-east Anatolia. By explaining the Qur'an in a vernacu-

28. A visit to a dershane in Tamirhane, Kartal-Istanbul, on 20 February 1994.

I was invited to attend one of the many iftars. I arrived at an apartment building and on the sixth floor where the Nur dershane is located. There are six permanent residents who are students within three bedrooms and a living room. Around twenty people joined together and they were mostly small merchants and one university professor in mechanical engineering. They all knew one another and newcomers to the room, shake the hand of those who do the interpetation for them. During their conversations, most of the talk focusses in on the business and economic situation in Turkey. Therefore, these dershanes are not only confined to religious debate and issues, but are centres for business networking and thus, are badly needed informational tools about the market. After a half hour of conversation, they joined the iftar.

The person who does the interpretation is educated and is given more respect thant he others. Those students who stay in this place call him "abı." From their conversations and interactions it is easily discernable who is the group leader. The difference in dershane is determined by who knows and interprets the Risale-i Nur best. Knowledge and formal education become a source of power in this context. What is important here is the stress on formal education and its role in producing Islam. Those who know Said best are expected to have formal education. neighbourhood imams are not taken that seriously because they are assumed to be dogmatic, and thus not able to have the same kind interpretive ability. In praying, not the older or those who have a better memorization of the Qur'an lead the prayer, but rather that person who will do the interpretation best. This person is Murad, who is professor of mechanical engineering. (Atilla). The person who leads the praying is assumed to know the text of Said and therefore receives more authority within this small group of Nurcus. However, there is an age-bound hierarchy in the way they sit in the room. Young people sit closer to the door. The interpreter sits at the centre stage.

After the iftar, the interpreter leads the praying and they sit for the ders —to read and interpret Said's work. The interpreter has "double" functions: (a) to read it loudly and in that process of reading he offers a Turkish translation of Arabic, Persian, or Ottoman words; and (b) interprets it in terms of the prevailing social, economic, and political problems. The person who does interpretation reads into Said Nursi's text his own thinking and understanding. For example, in this lesson the interpreter turned Said Nursi into an environmentalist. He says the following:

"The essence of Islam is balance and justice in environment and society. There is justice in this world and balance between nature and human societies. This balance could only be maintained if the coexistence between humans and nature is maintained in balance. Nothing God has created is useless or extra in this world. They all have their own functions even though we may not be aware of it. This also indicates the power of God we still do now know enough about the place of each animal and natural events which are created by God. The order in nature proves that there is a God. Said brings the power of God to the forefront and renews our faith. Communists and atheists see nature as the source of power but the order in nature points out the existence of God."

The interpreter constantly uses nature as an ordered system to prove the existence of God. Towards the end of his interpretations, few people ask questions. These questions aim to facilitate interpretation rather than to challenge either Said or the interpreter. In his response, the interpreter gives examples from Istanbul and the neighbourhood. He says: "Look at our **(Cont. overleaf)**

lar language, Said Nursi's message becomes very appealing. Moreover, his metaphorical writings created enough ambiguity for readers and interpreters to fill in their own voices.[29] Anatolian Islam is segmentary and inward-looking. It is communicated by metaphors and the relationship between persons and God was formed by the institution of şeyh. Although Said's text-based movement made the Qur'an more accessible to the masses, it did not totally succeed to replace charismatic leaders with the text. However, one of the implications of this movement has been the relative democratization of the Qur'an.

Said constantly seeks to prove that God exists by illustrating order in nature. Said sees Islam as "the master and guide of the sciences, and the chief and father of all true knowledge."[30] Said treats the universe and nature as the Book of Being and seeks to illustrate the power of its Author, namely God. He therefore never subordinates the phenomenal world to the religious text, but instead sees nature's order as indicative of God's being. Every move and incident in nature is interpreted as a sign to prove that God is One. Said wants Muslims to see the Qur'an as a necessary soil from which thinking about society may grow. For the Nurcus, the phenomenal world must be mastered fully. Because mastering the phenomenal world is equivalent to knowing God. Therefore, among the hard-science professions, e.g. medicine, chemistry, and physics, the Nur movement in more common. Clearly Said Nursi, like philosophers in the golden age of Islam, utilize neo-platonic thought. Nursi uses Plotinus' understanding of emanation, and then places a deistic twist to it. Whereas, for Plotinus, God spiritually emanates within a rational non-physical construct, Nursi sees God as an emanation from within the power of the physical uniformity and logic of nature. Said constantly uses biology and botany to prove the existence of God. Said's deistic mood was originally suggested by Şerif Mardin but was not articulated.[31] Moreover, one of the major political implications of his conceptualization of the laws of nature has been exclusion of "other voices" and the search for certainty in the political life.

Said Nursi argued that his transition from Old Said to New Said took place as a result of the recognition of the rational method of searching for God in

(28. Cont.) environment, there was a balance of God and we destroyed it with our own hands and we are made to pay the price. Ten years ago there were more gardens in this street. Look at it now. You have more buildings." The interpreter articulates Said Nursi's message in the modern context and within day-to-day experiences.

After the lesson, they start to enjoy their tea and again the centre of discussion was business-related. In my conversation with the university students, I realize that they do not read any books except Said Nursi's. One student told me that "abi's" do not want to "distract their attention with fashionable books." I was introduced to another "abi" who also interpreted a chapter, who is a graduate of the Middle East Technical University and currently works at Faisal Finance. Through these channels of business networking and employment have been achieved. He has a joint business with the person who invited me to this gathering. These dershanes are autonomous and each also functions as a business networking centre, and provides a ground for this much needed confidence and trust in society. These dershanes have strong class dimensions. The rich people tend to have their own dershane. Interpretation also varies with the class-dimension.

29. Şerif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change*, 37.

30. Said Nursî *Muhâkemat*, (Istanbul: Sözler Yayınevi, 1977), 8.

31. Şerif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change*, 141, 210, 216.

nature.[32] Although no scholars have attributed deism to Said, the works of God's "clock" are as clear as the French Positivists of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Although Said was not a sufi, he was not anti-tarikat. He argued that sufi traditions which are based on imitative learning and faith had little role in the social reforms dominated by scepticism. However, he realized the role of tarikats in rejuvenating Islam and adapting social changes in the Ottoman Empire.[33] In his essay entitled "*Telvihat-ı Tis'a*," Said supported the tarikats against the attacks of Kemalist regimes. In the writings of the New Said one sees the significance of "inner positivism" to turn discourse outside in. Although Said argued that the circumstances of the Republican period were not appropriate to preserve and perpetuate Islamic consciousness, his transformation was marked and moulded by his readings of A. Sirhindi's *Mektûbat*.

In his personal life, Said preferred total isolation and silence to plant his 'consciousness-building' seeds in the newly urbanized literate population. In his writing, he adapted a rationalist-sufi approach of cultivating the inner life to create an "inner community." He explained the existence of God by natural evidences and offered reasons for why individuals should have religious consciousness. By explaining God, he aimed to educate people and protect them from other secular ideologies. To make his message easier to grasp, Said's language and discourse changed; he used a more populist language, less Arabic and Persian and more Turkish. One becomes aware of this shift in language and message of the New Said in his new preface to *Mesnevi-i Nuriye*, which was added in 1956.[34] In his new writings, one comes across a pacifist Said who wants Muslims to move from the outside in.

Said conceptually divides faith (iman) and life (hayat). He argues that faith is formed through connections between heart, brain and spirit, whereas life is a zone where faith is expressed through behaving according to Islamic mores.[35] Said defines faith (iman) as the full understanding of human life from birth to death in terms of the Qur'anic concepts. A Muslim must know why he or she is created and how one comes to exist. After becoming conscious of these questions, Muslims can construct a community with this consciousness. Iman for Said brings out five things: respect, love, permitted (helal) and prohibited (haram) conduct, law and order, and communal life.[36] Said goes further and argues that Shari'a is the legal externalization of this consciousness and that Islam is the only binding force for national unity.

32. Said Nursî, *Sikke-i Tasdik-i Gaybî*, 67.

33. Said Nursî, *Mektûbat*, 491.

34. In addition to new introduction in *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, he made a new additional change to one of his works, *Hutbe-i Şamiye* (pp. 40-41). In this variation, one does not find a new discourse but rather a strategy to disseminate his ideas. We can detach these additions through a careful reading and historical mistakes. In this, he argues that "this issue is explained in *Mektûbat*." But *Mektûbat* was not written before 1911. This indicates that Said made additions when he translated them into modern Turkish. In *Lem'alar* (No. 23), he wrote a short note under the title of Ihtar. This manifests the position held by the New Said. Said wrote *Tabiat Risalesi* after 1925.

35. Said Nursi, *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 57-8.

36. Ibid., 181.

Said's writings were motivated by a sense of siege that Islam was in danger in this sceptical age. This sense of siege remained with Said till the end of his life and motivated him to defend the Qur'an by reason.

> "In former times the foundations of faith were secure; submission to them was firm. As for matters of detail, the statements of the learned were accepted as adequate, even without proof. Recently, however, misguidance has stretched out its hand against the foundations and pillars of the faith. Therefore the Wise and Compassionate One of Majestic Essence, Who grants to each disease a suitable cure, has caused a flame from the allegories (temsilat) of the Noble Qur'an —a bright manifestation of its miraculous nature— to spring forth and aid my writings in the service of the Qur'an, thus redeeming my impotence and weakness, my poverty and indigence."[37]

As the opening story of Ali illustrates, Said was aware of the negative consequences of scepticism and instrumental rationalism in undermining faith and religious consciousness. However, the story of Ali and Said's statement indicate that the Risale-i Nur Külliyatı's influence to restore faith is limited to pious families. His goal to replace faith by imitation with faith by certainty has been a questionable project. His attempt to interpret revelation within the framework of science creates more problems than it solves since science does not stand for certainty. However, Said Nursi's writings provided a new language to these urbanized populations to rebuild person-based communities. Richard Rorty argues that ethical thought is necessary to find out who we are and what we want to be. We define ourself in an urban environment in terms of our commitment to the ideal. In a Muslim society, ideals of just and free society are derived from Islamic practices. People define their identity by virtue of membership in a community of shared values and meanings. Since the commitment to an ideal and membership of a community is what makes us individual, a new moral discourse compatible with urban conditions becomes necessary. Islamic political revival therefore seeks to build new communities for the development of personal ties.

Politics of Said and His Support For Menderes

Said saw "political parties as the pillars of democracy."[38] However, in his earlier writings, Said argued that parties were compatible with Islam as long as they promote the unity and well-being of Muslims.[39] Said was very critical when the Society of Union and Progress became an authoritarian institution. He fully supported a multi-party system and did not hesitate to support the Democratic Party (DP) against the ruling Republican People's Party (RPP). He argued that parliamentary constitutionalism and the rule of law provide the best environement for the juvenation of Islam. Said saw political participation (meşveret) and the rule

37. Said Nursî, *Barla Hayatı*, 68. This is translated by Hamid Algar, "Said Nursi and the Risale-i Nur," 320.
38. Said Nursî, *Sünuhat*, 68.
39. Said Nursî, *Divan-ı Harb-i Örfî*, 45; Mesut Toplayıcı, "Islam ve Demokrasi," *Köprü*, No. 50, (1995), 56-69.

of law as the two pillars of justice. He defended parliamentarism and constitutionalism as the better means for the realization of justice.[40]

He did not support those marginal parties which had a more pro-Islamic agenda. Said argued that the goal was to reduce the damage or slow down the reforms which lead to scepticism. He supported the DP on the basis of pragmatic calculation rather than in terms of principle. Said argued that by nature each citizen should be "concerned with the issues of homeland, nation and government."[41] However, when the court accused him of exploiting Islam for political purposes, Said argued that "Islam is just like the sun. Its energy cannot put to an end by blowing it off.... This sun cannot be subordinate to the lights on the earth. Making Islam a means for earthly goals is a crime and disrespect to it."[42] By arguing that Islam cannot and should not be used political goals, Said consistently argued that "politics should be used in the service of Islam."[43] Said openly argued against the establishment of a pro-Islamic party since the gound was not ready.[44] Said's followers always remained suspicious towards pro-Islamic parties and argued that these parties are likely to harm Islam by using Islam for political goals. Said's writings constantly deal with the question of justice and treat it as the skeleton of society.

Due to the political radicalization of the Turkish left and its increasing dominance of art and culture, the followers of the Nur movement reluctantly became involved in politics in the 1970's. A group of them supported the pro-Islamic National Salvation Party. This political split within the Nur group was very much a reaction to the pro-big businessmen policies of the Justice Party in the late 1960's. A group of Nurcus took part in the establishment of the National Salvation Party and later on entered the Parliament. This group included A. Tevfik Paksu, Sudi Reşad Saruhan and Gündüz Sevilgen, who would become the major shareholders of the Turkish branch of the Saudi-based Faisal Finance in Istanbul.[45] As a result of political and ideological differences with Necmeddin Erbakan, and the policies pursued during the coalition government of the Salvation Party and the Republican People's Party, the Nurcu MP's left the Party.[46] This divorce from the National Salvation Party, which was dominated by Nakşibendis at the time, created a permanent restraint between the Salvation Party and the Nur groups. The Nur groups gave most of their support to the Justice Party of Süleyman Demirel in the 1970's. According to some Nurcus, even dershanes were used for political purposes to support the Justice Party.

40. Mesut Toplayıcı, 67.
41. Said Nursî, *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 31.
42. Said Nursî, *Hutbe-i Şâmiye*, 40.
43. Ibid., 50; see more about the similar argument in Said Nursî, *Beyanat ve Tenvirler*, 91-2, 105.
44. *Beyanat ve Tenvirler*, 24, 25-7.
45. This group of Nurcu became successful bankers in the 1980's and 1990's. See Ruşen Çakır, "Demirel'in Kozu Nurcular," *Nokta* (3 May 1987), 12-23.
46. M. Gündüz Sevilgen, *MSP'de Dört Yıl (1973-1977)* (Ankara: İstiklal Matbaası, 1979). This book examines the reasons why the Nurcu group split from the National Salvation Party of Necmeddin Erbakan.

III

Fragmentation and Diffusion

One of the main characteristics of the Nur movement in the 1980's and the 90's has been the ongoing fragmentation and competition over the ideological legacy of Said Nursi. There are three main groups, known as Fethullahcı, the followers of Fethullah Gülen, Yeni Asyacı (DYP), and Yeni Nesilciler. In Anatolia, almost every town has a study centre and even competing centres in a single neighbourhood. These groups neither constitute a political union nor a harmonious interpretation of political Islam. In this section, I seek to examine the socio-political factors behind this ongoing fragmentation of the Nur movement and its political implications for the consolidation of civil society.

Why are Islamic groups fragmented and dispersed? One of the main characteristics of the Islamic movement in Turkey is its fragmentation and pluralization. By pluralism, I mean the fragmentation of groups along interest and ideas but with increasing influence in society and politics.[47] The reasons behind this pluralization are politico-historical, social, and doctrinal. Having a common goal of Islamization and an imagined "external other" are not enough to overcome the dynamics of fragmentation. Regional, ethnic, generational, and socio-economic loyalties punctuated religious movements and provided a ground for fragmentation and improved the chances of shaping social and political spheres.

In the Ottoman period, tarikat played a key role and functioned as a centre for opposition to challenge the state-based ulema. Moreover, diverse townsmanship, ethnic groups, and village loyalties produced different branches of the same order. Pluralism is the nature of Turkish Islam. This historical legacy plays a key role in the fragmentation of the Islamic movement. Orders compete over the state resources and this political proximity also generates fragmentation. For example, when Esad Coşan sought to unify all orders and groups under one political front organization, he brought further division not between the orders but within his own rank.

There is no religious institutional authority to produce a single reading of the Qur'an and hadith. As orders and groups became more print-based, the conflict over interpretation becomes vivid. As Muslims seek to bring Islamic principles to day-to-day practices to create coherence and make sense of them, they need to interpret principles in the light of current ideas and challenging problems. This interpretation, in turn, steers a conflict since individuals interpret the texts on the basis of their own personal experiences, interests, and their previous knowledge of Islam. Therefore, Islamization by associational groups leads to pluralization since diverse interests leads to diverse understandings of Said's texts. The Nurcu movement and its pluralization in the Turkish context demonstrates the power of non-ideas in shaping ideas. There are different ways of reading into the Qur'an and interpreting it. The dynamism of the Nurcu movement is the source of its

47. I need to offer more on the distinction between fragmentation and pluralism.

fragmentation. As a changing society, it requires constant reading of the sacred text to deal with new innovations. Relatively rigid orders become incapable of interpreting the sacred text and will thus be less powerful. The successes of Nurcu groups became a source of imitation for other Islamic orders and groups. Sufi orders, such as the Nakşibendi, provided a cemaat-based social identity, and a set of moral values to regulate day-to-day conduct. The social and political conditions in the 1980's and 1990's created a more conducive environment for Islamic groups to expand their roles.

Adopting print is one of the most innovative steps these groups have taken. The pluralism of the Nurcu groups became a distinct characteristic of the Nur movement in Turkey. The texts of Said Nursi did not unify the groups but rather facilitated their fragmentation. Economic liberalization and political democratization played a determinant role in this process of fragmentation. Each group organized its own journal and created its community of readers. The print and media opportunities allowed different groups to turn journals into new discursive spaces.

Said Nursi supported interpretation not translation. The reason for this goes deeper. A Muslim can not say that "this is what the Qur'an says" but rather "this is the way I understand this ayet in this context." There is no single and permanent understanding of the Qur'an. Said neither stressed translation nor memorization but rather reading and interpretation. Interpretation allows individuals to reproduce the meaning of Islam in their daily life. This reproduction makes Islam part of daily life and a source of inspiration. In the tradition of interpretation, there are two ways of interpreting the text: zahirî, i.e., interpreting from outside as an objective entity; and batınî, i.e., interpreting the text in terms of its internal meaning and its relations with the general conclusion of the text. The zahirî interpretation takes the word literally and pays no attention to its deeper meaning. The batınî interpretation requires a training within Islamic concepts and idioms. The batınî seeks to reinterpret the text in terms of its intentions and purpose. The Qur'an is perceived as an organic, dialectic, ahistorical text. One can read the text from a universal position by ignoring its historical contexts.

It is not only Said's thinking that is reproduced but also his books. Said, for instance, never provided the Turkish translations or quoted the sources of the ayet or hadith. New editions of his books use citation carefully to give him more authenticity. Said was always against providing translations because it ends interpretation of verses. The new editions, which give the Turkish translation alongside the Arabic, illustrate how far the debate in Turkey has changed. This new revitalization of Risale-i Nur Külliyatı is taking place in the name of Said and despite his writings and methods. Thus, we are confronted with various versions of Nurculuk. This "scientification" of Said's writings took place during the 1980's and escalated in the 1990's. Said's conception of politics, society, freedom and self are re-examined and a coherent picture is offered. However, no one has yet developed a political agenda by using Said's writings. One reason for this is that Said's major goal was not to transform the social and political system

but rather reproduce the meaning of Islam and shape inner consciousness first. Political and social implications flow out from this consciousness.

The Turkish state gradually reduced its political pressure on the Nur movement and this, in turn, generated a natural fragmentation. There was no external enemy against which to erect a cohesive group. In addition to the availability of the media and the 'softening of the state, the penetration of different opinions from Asia and Europe also led to ideological friction. The new ideas stimulated diversity within the Nurcu group. Today, there are more than a dozen Nurcu textual-communities in Turkey. The most prominent one belongs to Fethullah Gülen, known as Fethullah Hoca. To understand why the Fethullah Hoca community rather than other textual-communities are the most dominant, one needs to explore the Nurcu movement to illustrate Fethullah Gülen's ideological and organizational position vis-à-vis the other circles.

Oral versus Written Culture

One of the main causes of fragmentation is the debate and use of oral versus written culture. Although Said stressed the written word and books more than orality and the tekke-based system, Turkish society was dominated by oral culture until the 1970's. There was, and still is to a significant extent, an oral culture and discourse in Turkey. Even written culture in Turkey is mostly an abridgement of a rich oral culture. Written culture is not an independent formation. You seek to internalize knowledge from what you read and filter from your own experience.

The transition to the Latin alphabet in 1928 limited the availability of written texts during the first period of the Republic. Moreover, it did not make much difference when Mustafa Kemal closed the tekkes since by that time they were no longer fulfilling their previous functions. Risale-i Nur Külliyatı was written in these years. Said wanted to bring written culture to the forefront by stressing text-based discourse rather than şeyh-based conversation. The Nurcu stressed ders (lessons) more that tarikat-based sohbet (conversation). This is a significant shift in the development of Turkish Islamic political and social thought. Autonomy to read and interpret the book and information is more abstract than memorizing spoken stories. In the case of the şeyh, knowledge is personal and transmission is carried out by face-to-face interactions. Moreover, the source of knowledge was keramet (miracle) but reason and proof. Although Said stressed the printed word, the dominant medium and discourse was shaped by oral culture. People start to read the book through another person who knows how to interpret it. In other words, the pattern of traditional production of knowledge through oral transmission was reproduced within the print-culture. One sees the impact of orality in the diffusion and understanding of the message of Said. Said seeks to develop a text-based discourse but this goal was circumscribed by the prevailing cultural patterns of production and consumption of knowledge.

The debate over mass production generated a split within the group. The dividing line came to be known as Yazıcılar (writers) versus the other who

supported mass production. The Yazıcılar, led by calligrapher Husrev Altınbaşak of Isparta, refused to use machinery and the Latin script for mass production. This attitude had nothing to do with the orientalist claim of being anti-technology, as some Turkish scholars claimed. The reasons were deeper than this. One reason was presented in my interview with two men who insist on hand reproduction in Ottoman and argue that the use of a machine devalues a text's authenticity. Indeed, recopying by hand requires intense work and care, and they believed that this process, in turn, makes the book more authentic and humane. Machinery creates a distance between the author, in this case Said, and his followers; hand reproduction by disciples offers psychological satisfaction and closes the gap between the author and readers. Moreover, Said wrote in the Arabic script and by insisting on hand reproduction in the Arabic script, Nurcus also wanted to perpetuate Arabic. This way of manual book production was treated as authentic and 'intimate' rather than using machines and the Latin script. Those who still insist on hand-written form of reproduction of Said's works claim that this way of writing and reading creates personal ties with the author and his message. Another reason is that handwriting facilitates the internalization of the message. They also argue this gives them a distinction over other groups by reproducing the message through handwriting.

After the death of Said, the controversy between the Yazıcılar and others have continued. However, as text was adopted, oral interpretation of it became more widespread. The Nurcu sought a second man to keep the unity and community together. They were looking a şeyh-like figure to interpret and make Said's text understandable. Those who were with Said insisted on the lesson (ders) system in which the books were read and interpreted for people. Those who do reading interpretation gained a position of power within the community. Orality was again reproduced through the abis (brothers). Abis took the role of hocaefendi in terms of authority and keeping the community together.

In 1969, a small group of highly educated Nurcus decided to establish a publication house and a journal. They established Mihrab Yayınevi and started to publish the magazine *İttihad* (1969-1971). Mustafa Polat became its first editor. The magazine was closed in 1971 by the military court. Zübeyr Gündüzalp insisted on publishing a newspapaer and in 1971 the Yeni Asya initiative was realized by the editorial board of *İttihad*. The people who formerly worked for the weekly *İttihad* started to work for the newspaper. Printing became a way of producing the message and disseminating it to Anatolia. With the help of printing technology and new distribution means, publishing became an institution in Turkish Islam. This position helps to promote print culture in the formation of Islamic discourse in Turkey. Those abis who have created authority and power through reading and interpreting the message were critical of publishing a magazine or newspaper. They argue that Risale-i Nur Külliyatı does not need a second vehicle such as a magazine or newspaper to clarify Said's message. Moreover, this opposition group feared that Said's teaching would be politicized by interpreting Risale-i Nur Külliyatı in terms of contemporary events. In a way,

there are several factors involved in this second division between the Nurcu groups which is caused by publication and the abis' struggle to control interpretation.

Having publishing houses along with journals and newspapers, the Nurcu groups were forced to cover public events and to get involved in the day-to-day political life of the country. Publishing did not only lead to debate within the movement, but also further politicized it. Mesut Toplayıcı, the editor of *Köprü*, argues that "printing was necessary to create harmony of reading and interpreting Said's works."[48] Moreover, he argues that the newspaper helped to navigate political coalitions and gave certain parties a forum to address voters. However, the Istanbul-based Nurcu groups maintained the role of oral methods of ders to carry Said's message to new migrants to the cities. Dershane, where lessons take place, became a new public space to socialize with people and exchange opinions. This dershane connection proved to be very useful and provided access to jobs, business connections and other social interactions. It helped to urbanize newcomers to cities and to provide them with a common language to grasp the urban environment. One of the main consequences of adopting print discourse therefore was the breakdown of an oral form of producing culture. This has helped printed culture to establish a place for itself. However, "going print" in a democratic environment also brought fragmentation of the Nurcu movement.

Political Factors: Ethnicity and Party Politics

As society diversifies and the Kemalist national ideology cracks, so does the understanding of Islam. Each group seeks to invoke a different, "imagined" Said to promote its narrow purpose. For example, the Kurdish nationalist magazine *Yeni Zemin* carefully tried to present Said Nursi as "a Kurdish nationalist" by utilizing the struggle of Old Said. The editor of *Yeni Zemin*, Mehmed Metiner, argues that "I like the activist Said who struggled for the recognition of Kurdish identity. Said is a major step in Islamic thought but not the end."[49] Metiner, the current political advisor to the Prosperity Party's Mayor of Istanbul, sees Islam as a means to challenge the state and to open political space for the expression of Kurdish nationalism. Ethnicization of Said Nursi takes place by selectively reading his writings and life struggles. Some Kurdish intellectuals argue that Said was constantly persecuted not only because of his Islamism but also because of his ethnic Kurdish identity. However, most of the Nurcu groups cite competing interpretations of Said Nursi's writings on political and social matters to justify their split. For example, most of the debates evolves around Said's letters written to his followers from Kastamonu and Barla.

Political Issues and Competing Loyalties

Although some Nurcus —A. Tevfik Paksu, Sudi Reşad Saruhan, and Gündüz Sevilgen— were involved in active politics between 1973-1977 within the pro-Islamic National Salvation Party, the Nur movement overall supported the

48. Interview with Mesut Toplayıcı on 15 March 1995.
49. From my interview with Mehmet Metiner, 18 May 1994.

Democrat Party and the Justice Party. Even those who were involved in politics within the National Salvation Party withdrew their support and allied themselves with Süleyman Demirel's Justice Party.

However, conflicting views about the 1980 military coup led to a split within the group. Internal quarrels continued inside the group until 1982. The first group, known as Gazeteciler (journalist), consistently supported Süleyman Demirel and insisted in displaying an anti-military attitude. They decided to vote against the proposed Constitution. However, two prominent leaders of the Nur movement, Mehmet Kırkıncı of Erzurum and Fethullah Gülen of İzmir, gave their blessing to the 1982 Constitution.

The 1982 Constitution created a major debate within the Nur groups. Those who were against it argued that the 1982 Constitution was anti-democratic. The Constitution, indeed, sought to create a more powerful state by shrinking the borders of society. It limited the political rights and freedoms and put associational life under state supervision. This also limited the functions of the Nur community. This forced the Nur community to re-examine its situation and come up with new solutions. Some Nurcus wanted, through print, to challenge the Constitution and urge followers to vote "no." When the newspaper *Yeni Asya* took this approach, many Nurcu became upset that the group was opening a confrontational front with the state. This opened a big debate within the Nur movement. Some people demanded that the group stop publishing its newspaper and prominent Nurcus, such as Mehmet Kırkıncı, were visited by the military and "convinced" to support the Constitution or accept the closure of Nur dormitories and dershanes in that region.

The case of Kırkıncı proves that in the city of Erzurum similar patterns of traditional murid-murşid framework were reproduced within the oral dominated discourse. Kırkıncı asked his followers to support the Constitution. The state has managed to control those abis that managed to revive a mixed oral and print culture. As a result of my own research in Erzurum and Bayburt, I came across similar tarikat relationships among the Nurcu groups. Here the dershane perform the functions of tekke and hocaefendi replaced by abi. In a way, Said was reproduced within the patterns of orality. Therefore, the contribution of the Risale-i Nur Külliyatı in regards to the freedom of the individual was limited in Erzurum and eastern Turkey. In this region, the concepts of state and community override individual concerns and rights. Regional conditions and political developments punctuate the diversity within the Nurcu movements. For example, in Erzurum, one Nurcu told me that "we had to support the army because we did not, and do not, want to see the mosque compete with the barracks over authority, but rather to work together and complement each other. Can you have a mosque without a powerful and disciplined army?" The Nur movement not only motivated a change in society but also was changed by the socio-political conditions.

After the vote of the 1982 Constitution, those who supported the Constitution supported by Özal. Gazeteciler remained anti-Özal and argued that Turgut Özal was the agent of the military coup. However, M. Kırkıncı and F. Gülen openly

supported the Özal's Motherland Party. This political disagreement facilitated fragmentation and each group declared its independence by establishing its own magazine and cultural foundation. The magazine, like a flag for nations, has become the sign of independence and authority.

The influence of the Nur movement has increased parallel with the fragmentation of the movement. The paradox indicates the flexibility and wide range of the Nur idiom. This fragmentation led to fierce competition among Turkish political parties to control the followers of Nur. As a result of this fragmentation, individuality gained prominence, not abis or so-called leaders. As the cohesiveness of cema'ats fractured, new voices and leaders surfaced to develop their own vision of Turkey *qua* Said's writings. The fragmentation is also related to economic developments and generational conflicts. Before 1982, proximity to the government was as important as connections with businessmen. Since 1983 the Nur movement has consistently defended the free market and withdrawal of the state from economic and educational spheres. This position was welcomed by the new Anatolian-based bourgeoisie and they used financial means to open new dormitories and study-houses. Fethullah Gülen navigated the movement among this new bourgeoisie and mobilized them to support his private high schools in Turkey and Central Asia. Since the 1980's most of the new businessmen allied themselves with the policies of the Motherland Party and some Nurcu groups also supported the Motherland Party. New expanding markets consolidated the position of new bourgeoisie and the revival of a socially conservative, politically progressive, market-oriented Islamism. The Nur groups allied themselves with the Motherland Party and this coalition played a key role in the transformation of the country.

The major break took place in 1990 when a large and dynamic group split from Gazeteciler and formed Yeni Nesilciler (New Generation). Nesilciler did not want to remain marginal and demanded unity with other Islamic groups to support the Motherland Party. Moreover, the successes of Kırkıncı and Gülen were further motivations not to stay with Süleyman Demirel's Justice Party. Finally, many Nurcus came to the conclusion that serving Islam in the best way required material means, obliging Nur groups to be more sensitive to the political concerns of business groups.

Generational Differences

The pluralization of the Nurcu movement was in large part due to generational differences. The Nur movement has the largest number of educated people and youngest clientele. It dominates teachers' colleges and some other higher educational institutions. The clientele of Nur movement are either urbanized or in the process of being urbanized.

Older Nurcus are either involved in trade or are professionals —doctors, lawyers, scholars, teachers, and engineers. Although the Nurcus constitute a series of textual-communities, generational variation shapes interpretations and this, in turn, creates distinction.

As a result of my observation in different parts of eastern and central Anatolian towns, I came across Nurcus who were either merchants, teachers, doctors, or mostly university students. Therefore, trade networks and student dormitories become the main centres for dissemination of Said's ideas.

The Nurcu community has three generational bodies: (1) Those who saw Said and participated in his conversations —this group was very coherent due to the state suppression. Its prominent members constituted mutevelli[50] until the mid-1970's. The repressive policies of the Republic increased its cohesiveness and made "trust" a key value held by members of the movement. There was very little debate or reflection since they were united against the common enemy: the civilizing forces of the state. Their main duty was the production and preservation of the Risale-i Nur Külliyatı. The second age-group consists of those who are educated by the first generation Nurcus and dominated by Gazeteciler. This group stressed science and technology to make Said Nursi's message relevant to the youth. It established journals and newspapers to mediate Said's message within the context of current affairs. As Said's message diffused through Turkish society, it had unexpected consequences. It helped to demonstrate the compatibility of Islam with democracy and promoted the formation of an associational society. One of the major contributions of this group was its adamant fight against translated Islamic literature. Gazeteciler took a very critical attitude toward the translation of Sayyid Mawdudi, Sayyid Qutb, or Hasan al-Banna. They argued that these books do not represent a deeper understanding of Islam and do not bring new understanding to cope with the present challenges. İhsan Atasoy argues that "the translated books were offering a blueprint for an Islamic state and economic system. They do not confront the question of renewing faith within the sceptic age."[51]

Said Nursi, unlike Mawdudi, Qutb, or Banna, did not seek a political collective movement to control the state. He stressed the formation of an individual consciousness as a precondition for a just society. He wanted to offer a new conceptual ground to Muslims to defend their inner world against the expanding ideologies of the West. İhsan Atasoy argues that "Nur student criticism of these translated books, which were mostly written in jail cells, was interpreted as a sign of our conservatism. But time has demonstrated that we were right. What Mawdudi or Qutb wrote reflect their own condition and it is a prison-notebook Islam, where anger is dominant. We do not need this since it lacks art and inner dimensions."[52] Still many Nur dormitories do not welcome reading Mawdudi, Qutb, or Banna. They do not even let the books of the prominent Turkish Islamist intellectuals (İsmet Özel, Ali Bulaç, and Rasim Özdenören) to be carried inside. However, in recent years there is more openness towards other Islamist writers.

The third generation of Nurcus dominate the university student body and control a large part of the media and publishing that is relatively open to the ideas of

51. From the author's interview with İhsan Atasoy, 16 March 1995.
52. Ibid.

all thinkers. This group tends to read other writers after internalizing Said's message. The main characteristic of this new group of Nurcus is their creolization of their ideas. This group is dominated by university students and most are followers of Fethullah Gülen. They see social life as a farm to be cultivated in accordance with Islamic teachings. This group is more confident and activist. Although the goal of Said was to free faith from scepticism, there remain diverse interpretations about his writings. The group is still critical of those radicalists who want to reduce Islam to a political blueprint and create "heaven" through the power of the state. Many Nurcu feel anxious when the Qur'anic verses are made into political slogans. Some radical Islamists in Turkey criticize Nurcus as "good readers and debaters but poor activists and loyal crowds at the market." Many Nurcu argue that radical sloganist approaches could scare the state and create an anti-Islamic image, which could be consumed by anti-Islamic forces in Russia and Europe.

* * *

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi in the National Struggle

Cezmi Eraslan

Due to its far-reaching and profound consequences, the period known as the National Struggle (1918-1922) is of the greatest importance for the history of the Republic. The very survival of the six-century-old empire being at stake drove those who loved their country and nation to seek solutions. The majority of those who participated in the active stage of the struggle were soldiers, men of religion, and the self-employed, which shows that this sector was the most closely concerned with the country's destiny.

However, as is known, in the second stage, which began on 19th May 1919 with the Sultan's consent after having been put before and accepted by the Istanbul government, the thinkers and scholars of the country were faced with making a choice between two alternatives. Success was going to show which of these was right: following the Istanbul government, or supporting the assembly and government in Ankara. The Istanbul government and Sultan first supported the Anatolia movement, then somewhat distanced themselves from it, and finally, after April 1920, considered it to be hostile. But since it was victorious, those who opposed it suffered a loss of prestige. Nevertheless, people from just about every sector of society were compelled to face up to this dilemma.

One of the rare people who was able to judge both sides of it fairly and reasonably and reconcile them was Said Nursi. In this paper I shall discuss his work

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Hutûvât-ı Sitte (The Six Steps), which was his most noteworthy activity at this stage, and shall describe his not excluding the Caliph but finely gauging his sensitive position; his war with his pen on this front; and his success and being summoned by Ataturk to Ankara, the centre of the national movement.

If one asks: "Why The Six Steps?", the answer will be found on becoming acquainted with the writer of this short piece, and his extremely fluent pen, brain and judgement.

Despite its being only a pamphlet and being written when Istanbul was occupied by the Entente Powers, it is laced with exceedingly detailed and far-seeing observations. It describes most succinctly the Armistice period and Ottoman Government, and the mentality of the occupying forces, and public opinion.

Another matter that prompted me to discuss The Six Steps was the great favour Said Nursi and his struggle found in Ankara because of it, and the enthusiastic support it received, and its being the cause of his being invited to Ankara so that he could continue his struggle there.[1]

We should immediately recall Said Nursi's attitude towards the *fatwas* which the Shaykh al-Islam issued for various reasons right at the beginning of the national movement. A large number of Muftis and men of religion in Anatolia issued counter-*fatwas,* for these *fatwas* condemned the National Forces both according to religion and in the general view, and ruled that it was lawful to take the lives and seize the property of those who joined them. Said Nursi also made pronouncements pointing out the inconsistencies and essential errors of the Istanbul *fatwas*. He stated that both sides should be heard, and asserted that the Anatolian side should also be listened to. Saying that "tyranny is being called justice; jihad, insurrection; and captivity, freedom," he refuted the Istanbul *fatwa*.[2] We see that at this point Said Nursi applauded the activities of the Anatolia movement:

> "It is noteworthy that the religious scholars of the centre of the Caliphate, and the Darü'l-Hikmet, and moral police could not halt grievous sins like immoral conduct, drinking, and gambling, let alone put a stop to them altogether. Whereas they were prevented at a single command of the Ankara government. This means that if principles are not combined with wisdom, rules with authority, laws with right, and bonds with power, they will not fruitful among the mass of the people."[3]

We should point out here that despite being the centre of the Caliphate, the centre of learning, and the centre of government, because of its lack of power, Istanbul could not carry out its functions. We see that this impotence made the Ottoman government incapable of protecting the rights of the state and nation and led the leaders, who were appointed numerous times during the period, to seek the protection of the occupying powers, as Said Nursi indicates in the Sixth Step.

The Six Steps of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi begins with defining the enemy. He

1. Şahiner, Necmeddin, *Bilinmeyen Taraflarıyla Bediüzzaman Said Nursî*, Istanbul 1991, 252.
2. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Tulûat*, Ankara 1976, 80.
3. Ibid.

says that every age has its satan in human form and that through its tyrannical politics, the state which deputizes for Satan at this time spreads dissension among people in order to achieve its aims, and tries to do this against the Ottoman Empire in six steps. The satan in human form called 'al-Khannas' acts on the harmful traits in human nature through active propaganda, exploiting their desire for revenge or greed for wealth and position, or their irreligion, or bigotry, for its own political ends.

After this brief introduction, it will be useful to touch on the situation of the Ottoman Empire and nation at that time in order to facilitate seeing the aptness of The Six Steps.

The final days of the multi-nation, multi-religious state, which had continued its existence for six centuries, were concluded with a war that lasted four years and deeply wounded the state and nation in a way that could not easily heal. But the non-physical blows which succeeded the physical ones and were more far-reaching, followed on in succession. On 15th May, 1919, the Greeks, whom the British supported for reasons of internal politics, landed at Izmir, and causing havoc and destruction, started to advance, despite having given their word to remain in a restricted area. The National Struggle began with this occupation, and on Mustafa Kemal Pasha being sent to Anatolia as Inspector of the Ninth Army, it found its leader and took on a more organized appearance. The better organization of the National Struggle aggravated the occupying forces and led to their increasing their pressure on the government, as a result of which the Ottoman government was obliged to proclaim the movement, which itself had inaugurated, to be illegal, in the way that we shall describe in detail in the Fifth Step. However, not wanting the matter to remain in mid-air, the occupying forces occupied Istanbul on 16th March 1920. With this pamphlet, Said Nursi joined in the struggle against the enemy, who had decided to achieve its result in six steps.

In the first of the Six Steps, Said Nursi draws attention to a very important point inferred by the occupying forces, which says: "You deserved the calamity; Divine Determining is not tyrannical, it acts with justice. In which case you should be resigned to the treatment you receive." For we see that by saying "You wronged us, and wrong us, not because of our sins, but because of our Islam," and emphasizing that to accept it and be resigned to it would be against Islam, Said Nursi began by trying to raise the morale of society.

By saying this, Said Nursi was alluding to a situation which caused the occupying forces to say the above. For it is a fact that although the Committee of Union and Progress government had come to power with high-flown claims of constitutionalism and freedom, they had imposed a severe dictatorship, causing the people anxiety. Some members of the CUP had enrolled in the Mason organizations, and others neglected Islam because of their involvement with Positivism, thus making religious quarters look coldly on them. Then because the British used soldiers from their Muslim colonies during the First World War as part of their propaganda to save the Caliph from the irreligious Mason members of the CUP, it had made some of the religious sections of society look on Britain as

a saviour.[4] And as a party, the Party of Union and Accord together with its leader, Damad Ferid Pasha, followed a policy of virtually unconditional support for the British.

At the second stage it is said: "Why do you hold back from being friends and supporters of us while you are friendly towards other infidels?" Said Nursi considers this approach to be a satanic device and suggests that accepting a helping hand is the same as kissing the hand of an enemy. To repulse an enemy of Islam one may accept the helping hand of another, but to touch the hand even which represents unremitting enmity is to be hostile to Islam. The occupying powers mention friendliness towards other infidels here, because on 14th January 1919 the leading figures of the literary and press world had founded the Turkish Wilsonian League (*Wilson Prensipleri Cemiyeti*), for the purpose of following the principles of the American President.

Furthermore, Article Seven of the Sivas Congress was an indirect request to America for economic and industrial aid, without infringing political independence. General Harbourd later informed his country about the National Movement after having met with Mustafa Kemal Pasha in Sivas.

It will be useful to make a brief point here in order to understand the subsequent steps. The army, politicians, intellectuals, and people gathered around two ideas: Firstly: the supporters of the National Struggle, who thought that armed resistance should be organized against the occupying forces without giving up the political initiative. And secondly, those who believed that the question should be solved through diplomacy alone, without doing anything to upset the occupying powers. Damad Ferid Pasha, who four times was appointed leader of the Ottoman Government during this period of crisis, was the most prominent of the latter. At the start the Sultan belonged to the former group, but unable to withstand the excessive pressure brought to bear on him, he gave up hope and moved into the second group.

On coming to the Third Step, we observe that Ottoman society is being addressed: "Those who have governed you up to now have done so badly and made a mess of things, so be resigned to us." Looking from a broad historical perspective, Said Nursi points out that this is clearly a ruse, and that it is the same power that lies at the bottom of these evils. He points out that the enemy has achieved this result by distancing the Ottoman rulers from the people, breaking them off from their spiritual and moral values, making them look coldly on their religion, and by instilling in them the idea that they can get somewhere only by imitating them. However, he calls out with great determination that "we shall live both as human beings and as Muslims." The same matter was mentioned in a telegraph, sent on 23rd June, 1919 to the Ministry of Internal Affairs by the *Kaymakam* of Salihli, Tahsin Bey:

> "The Menemen disaster, which followed on after the Izmir events, has caused great alarm to the people here, since they are close to the occupied zone, and in neighbouring areas, and has wounded their religious and national sentiments. They resolved to defend their country and preserve their sense of honour, so have taken to arms. Establishing their headquarters here, the militia command are raising troops to form the National Forces, and these are daily increasing with recruits and assistance coming from all around."[5]

4. Bilge, Criss, *İşgal Altında İstanbul 1918-1923*, Istanbul 1994, 73.

Thus we learn from the documents that it was not a temporary reaction. Tahsin Bey says also that if the government does nothing concrete to prevent the Greek advance, "it will not be possible to halt the national movement and massing [of people]" in the area.[6] And indeed, this religious, national, and patriotic 'uprising' was to continue to grow till independence.

The fourth of the Steps was an important piece of propaganda: "Those who govern you and have taken up a hostile position towards me, the bandit leaders in Anatolia, have other intentions. Their aim is not religion and Islam." Said Nursi considers this to be a satanic stratagem as well, and stating that the leaders of the movement are only means, says that their intention does not have a significant effect on the chief aim, which was the deliverance of religion, the country and nation. There was no dispute over this at all. It was a question of propaganda, as we mentioned before, in order to destroy the support of the people and religious intellectuals for a movement which was of prime importance for saving the country. Although the differences in ideas that emerged among the leaders after the victory of the National Struggle, and their roads parting to an extent, causes one to question the truth of the assertion, their chief aim was to save those whose wish was to exalt the Qur'an. We can see that Said Nursi was aware of differences of opinion. It should be realized that the leaders were truly distinguished persons of the time, who suffered at the plight of their country; their differences emerged only subsequently, as stated above.

The most clearly effective of the Steps was the Fifth: "The Caliph's decree came out in favour of our policies." At that time when communications were inadequately developed, this, which some people try to exploit even today, had extremely negative effects on the National Movement. Said Nursi gave a considerable boost to the National Movement's morale by proving that the Caliph's decree was not valid in this matter, and that Vahiduddin, who was himself pious, had not issued it voluntarily, and therefore it did not have to be obeyed. There is a difference between a decree issued by the Caliph as an individual, and a decree of the collective personality of the Caliphate issued in the name of the Umma. In order for this collective personality to follow the affairs of the Islamic world, its power should be derived from the consultative council of the Umma (the National Assembly), which is the equivalent of its reason, and on its army and free nation. The decree was issued however under the bayonets and constraint of the occupying forces, and should not therefore be complied with. On looking at the relevant documents of the period, we see that the commander of the British force of occupation exerted extreme pressure to have Mustafa Kemal Pasha

5. Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), Dahiliye Nezareti Kalem-i Müdiriyeti (DH. KMS), 52-2/81; BOA, DH. KMS, 54-2/44, Lef 16.

6. BOA, DH. KMS, 52-3/31. Telegraph from Tahsin Bey, 2/7/1919.

restrained from his activities in Samsun and Amasya. When finally the Sultan took up the matter, in the telegraph dated 8th July 1919, he drew the attention of the British to Mustafa Kemal's activities, and they began to coerce the government. We should recall that although he was attempting to do something by means of politics and diplomacy, initiatives of this sort created a negative atmosphere.[7] There is a further striking point in this telegraph of the Sultan. It is emphasized that "Even if it is easy for the provinces to be saved from the centre of the Sultanate when the existence and independence of our country have been successfully secured, it will not be possible to liberate the centre from the provinces if it is exposed to danger."[8] The reasonable thing to do was therefore to maintain public order in the country. Said Nursi's approach differed on this point. He says:

> "The best thing to do is to look from the periphery to the centre and choose what is of greatest advantage to Islam."

And he points out

> "..the unacceptability of an idea which looks from the centre to the periphery; and when attacked sacrifices Islam for this state, and this state for Anatolia, and Anatolia for Istanbul, and Istanbul for the Ottoman dynasty."

We may make a further point here: the aim of both the Caliph and the movement in Anatolia was to save the nation, but more than anything, Said Nursi's approach looked to all the Islamic world. It appears he was aware that the struggle that was to take place here would concern the future of the Islamic world as a whole. For this reason he insists that a *fatwa* preventing the struggle was not valid.

If we return to those days, the first stage came to an end with the decision to arrest Ataturk and his companions, and swiftly disband the forces which had been formed by military and civil leaders as a precautionary measure. This was considered to be of paramount importance.[9] The differences between the sides were to a great extent resolved during the meetings in Amasya from 20th to 22nd October, 1919, and credibility restored. However, the Caliph issued a decree following the occupation of Istanbul, the raid on the Parliament and then its abolition and the opening of the National Assembly in Ankara on 23rd April 1920. In consequence of the measures taken by Damad Ferid Pasha's government, he ordered the execution of "Mustafa Kemal, Kara Vasıf, Ali Fuat Pasha, Alfred Rüstem, Doctor Adnan Bey, and Halide Edip Hanım, who have organized and incited the dissension and strife which has broken out under the name of the National Forces." However, at this stage the Caliph was also under threat of Istanbul being handed over to the Greeks.[10]

It is understood from all the above that the enemy alluded to is Britain, as is

7. Atatürk'le İlgili Arşiv Belgeleri, Ankara 1982, 46 (Doc. 48).
8. Ibid., 155.
9. BOA, DH. KMS, 53-2/63, Lef 1.
10. BOA, DH. KMS, 49-1/57. See also, Sonyel, Salahi, *Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı ve Dış Politika*, Ankara 1987, i-ii, 91.

shown fully in the Sixth Step. There it says: "It is pointless for you to resist me. How can you do now what you could not do together with your ally?" Firstly I shall give Said Nursi's reply, then in chronological order the documents that verify what he says.

A power which appeared to be strong due to deception and intrigue is no longer intimidating. For "deception and intrigue are effective only so long as they are covert;" on coming out into the open, they become bankrupt and lose their power. Secondly, an opposing force blocks ninety per cent of that empty power. And it is not possible with the remainder to silence the Islamic world, whose troubles and their remedies are shared, and to hold it under your despotism so that it cannot stir as previously. (I have to say here that the expression "the Islamic world, whose troubles and their remedies are shared" was only the expression of a wish.)

Thirdly, "since you are killing us, there are two ways of dying: the first is to fall under your feet, and for you to kill our spirit and conscience with our own hands by our surrendering to you." (The course of action the Istanbul government had chosen was the equivalent of condemning all the world of Islam to death and eternal defeat.) "The second way is for our spirit and heart to remain alive by spitting in your face and hitting you in the eye. The body becomes a martyr again, but our belief and virtue are not insulted. Through Islamic pride, they are not mocked." (This way is the National Struggle, which was gaining momentum in Anatolia. Just as it heartened the nation, and strengthened its resistance, and gave it a zest for living, so its victories led to very positive demonstrations, not only within the country, but throughout the Islamic world, becoming an example for it.) The situation of "They take us to the Ka'ba and want us to exalt the Qur'an," which Said Nursi alludes to in the Fifth Step, may be understood generally as preventing our belief and honour being trampled underfoot and raising to life the belief and honour of Islam for all Muslims.

"In short: love of Islam necessitates being inimical to you. Gabriel and Satan cannot be reconciled." (We should recall that this refers to that time.) By saying that the most stupid, the most pitiful idea in all our politics is that which considers "the ambitions and benefits of that nation to be conformable with the benefits and dignity of Islam," he is drawing attention to the fact that it is not only an Ottoman or Istanbul question, but is related to an Islamic attitude. He points out that the most base and imbecile idea is "to accept life under [British] protection," and to suppose that it is the only chance of life, which is "utterly impossible."

With these lines, Said Nursi is condemning support for a British Mandate or Protectorate and stating that the decision of the existing government, which in part arose from its powerlessness, to accept the protection of the occupying powers was absolutely impossible.[11] I shall cite the documents related to this at the end.

11. Truly, the government's policy of doing nothing and surrendering themselves to the mercy of the occupying forces was ineffectual to the utmost degree. So much so that the Sultan himself complained that the British completely disregarded the government and parliament, wanted everything to be sought from themselves and had everything done themselves, but when request was made to discuss the peace terms, they said that [the Ottomans] had no diplomatic **(Cont. overleaf)**

We see that here Said Nursi is making reference to Article 7 of the Mondros Agreement.[12] "[Britain] says: Continue to live, but if any one man betrays me, I shall eliminate him. If anyone opposes his merciless tyranny out of loyalty to right, I shall wipe out the whole community." Said Nursi calls down curses on the civilization that permits it to do this, and is of the idea that this hatred and enmity of the British is not only due to the war. If that had been the case, the enmity would have evaporated on the defeat, the same as with the others. Saying that even proverbially timid animals defeat their enemies with unforeseen strength when compelled to, he cites the Russian peasants as an example. He says: "Just as ice can split a cannon-ball, a natural stirring and excitement can shatter everything when exposed to the icy and tyrannical hostility of oppression." In addition, he does not refrain from divulging the optimism he felt that "the extraordinary valour inherent in belief, and the world-acclaimed courage inherent in the pride of Islam may show miracles at any time through the awakening of Islamic brotherhood."

We see in the documents how the claims of the British in this final Step had been accepted by even the very highest ranks of state officialdom, and an infinite weariness in the face of the power of the enemy, whom we had been unable to defeat with the allies. As follows: the coded message the Ministry of Internal Affairs sent on 17th May 1919 to the twelve provinces ranging from Edirne to Van, and to fifteen *Mutasarrıfs* from Çatalca to Erzincan in response to the reaction to the Greek invasion of Izmir, forms a good start to this Step. It is stated that the government lodged the very strongest protests about the occupation with the representatives of the occupying powers in Istanbul, then the struggle is condemned to failure from the outset with a submissive "it is not physically possible to resist the dominant power."[13]

However, it is stated that this in no way meant a waiving of rights, and until the situation became clear (until a political solution was found), it was considered "patriotic to preserve dignity and public peace."[14] Those ruling the country appear to have agreed that we could not do singlehanded what we had not been able to do together with our allies, as is clear in all the rest of the documents I shall cite. Following this, they attempted to minimize the reactions, but anxious at Mustafa Kemal Pasha's activities in Samsun, Havza, and Amasya, the British intensified their pressure. In a message sent on 9th June 1919 from the Foreign Ministry to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, attention was drawn in particular to the British Extraordinary Envoy, Sir Arthur Calthorpe's, request for the dismissal of Mustafa Kemal Pasha, and in general to the extremely serious consequences of any unrest which might break out in the country, and of any movement of a religious nature between the ethnic elements making up the state.[15]

(11. Cont.) representative and were not authorized to discuss anything; he said that nothing could be obtained in this way. See, Türkgeldi, Ali Fuat, *Görüp İşittiklerim*, Ankara 1988, 182-3.

12. The article stating that the occupying forces could occupy those places that posed any threat to their security.

13. BOA, Dahiliye Nezareti Şifre Kalemi (DH. ŞFR), 99/222.

14. Ibid.

15. BOA, DH. KMS, 53-1/43, Lef 2.

Bowing to this pressure, the government decided that public security and order would be maintained absolutely and those who either permitted or participated in actions that might disturb public order for whatever reason, would be punished severely. This shows how successfully the threat: "Continue to live, but if anyone betrays me, I shall eliminate him" had pacified the government.

It is seen in the following coded telegraph to be sent as a circular, dated 18th June 1919, that submissiveness and lack of self-confidence were at a peak: "However much it is grieved and offended at the rights-transgressing, usurping, cruel occupations, the Ottoman Government will not at this time enter into war with Greece, nor even with Italy. For its situation is such that it can preserve its existence only by diplomacy."[16] It was at a time the delegates attending the Paris Peace Conference, which diplomatic activity was turning in our favour, were increasingly optimistic that they could save at least "the basic components of the fatherland," and it was believed that any sort of movement that would hinder these successes would be disastrous. It was pointed out that such a disaster might consist of forming a national army, actively preventing annexation, making preparations for national defence. Such an approach was seen as "naive patriotism."[17] Convinced that the country and nation could do nothing with its own power and resources, when the Greeks entered Thrace, the government decided in the face of the resident Greeks of the area arming and getting above themselves that "the Greek regiments should be removed from the area, and if that is not possible they should be exchanged with any one of the military forces of the Entente powers, and that the people's arms" should be collected by the Entente forces.[18] We see that the government was sincere in these views, and that in Said Nursi's words, considered the interests of the nation to be identical with its own decisions: "Since the Ottoman Army has undertaken the question of defence, no need remains for private forces. It has therefore been made clear that [they] should give this up and set about their own business."[19]

Another approach is set out in a note dated 2nd August 1919, which explained that the government did not consider the preservation and protection of the bases of the state, nation, and country to concern itself alone, nor the people who lived in it to possess any rights, freedom, or duties.

The government had attempted every sort of diplomatic and political means to prevent the Greek aggression, had issued frequent warnings to those concerned, and was hopeful of obtaining positive results in the near future, thus its sole anxiety arose from the unfavourable effects of "all sorts of attempts and actions carried out by irresponsible people."[20] It was of the utmost importance that a stop was put to undesirable actions of this sort in the name of the national interest. Without allowing any possibility of misunderstanding here, we should add that

16. BOA, DH. KMS, 52-2/44, Lef 2.

17. Ibid.

18. BOA, DH. KMS, 53-2/34, Lef 1.

19. Ibid.

20. BOA, DH. KMS, 53-3/3, Lef 1. Official letter to the Salihli *kaza* Kaymakamlık from the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

the Entente Powers were not unconcerned with the requests of the Ottoman Government, but they laid down the condition that firstly the National Forces and organization were disbanded before complying with its wishes.[21]

It will be useful before completing this section to give an example of the approaches to the problem of the provincial authorities. It should be noted at once that there were administrators who, not understanding the situation, attempted to prevent good intentioned efforts; those who comprehended it and urged the government to be more active; and those who complained at the government not taking a clear stand. For example, the "most urgent" coded telegraph dated 16th July 1919 sent by Faik Bey, the *Mutasarrıf* of Denizli, is worthy of note. Complaining that from the beginning of the occupation till that time no notice had been taken of his warnings, he then analyses the situation. He says that there are two sorts of measures that could be taken to halt the spread of the occupation, the first of which is "the restriction of the area of the occupation through political initiative" and the alleviation of the pressures in the occupied areas; while the other was "to prevent the expansion of the occupied area by force" contrary to the conference decisions.[22] Although he did not consider himself to possess the authority to say whether or not anything could be gained through diplomacy, the practicability of preventing the expansion by force had been seen in the recent Aydın incidents. The National Forces could prevent the enemy advance. Developments "were proving that Greece was prepared to retreat when met by force."[23] It was possible, with a well-organized army, to prevent the loss of thousands or hundreds of thousands of Muslims and their property.

On the other hand, for example, in a telegraph sent to the Ministry of Internal Affairs by Ulvi Bey, the *Mutasarrıf* of Kayseri, it is emphasized that they wanted to justify themselves for what they had done in not complying with the judicious commands of the government against the National Forces, claiming they had been given because opposition to the Entente Powers necessitated this. Ulvi Bey was also prepared to spoil the positive attitude towards the National Forces of the officers who visited the region as inspectors. We learn too from the same telegraph that the move in the area was towards definite prohibition of the National Forces and brigandry.[24]

Ahmed Hulusi Bey, the Mufti of Denizli and head of its national committee, informed the government that the people's reactions of this sort would cease only if peace was maintained in the region, and aggression and oppression brought to an end.[25]

It was a fact that the people's respect for the government and their loyalty were extremely strong. However, security of life, property and honour had first

21. BOA, DH. KMS, 54-2/44, Lef 1.
22. BOA, DH. KMS, 52-3/49, Lef 3-6.
23. Ibid.
24. BOA, DH. KMS, 53-2/109.
25. BOA, DH. KMS, 53-2/39. Telegraph from the Mufti's Office, dated 28/7/1919.

to be secured, then public order sought.[26] During the Balıkesir Congress, which was being held around the same time, the local notables, merchants, and artisans, as well as members of the National Forces, expressed their loyalty to the state and Caliphate on every opportunity.[27]

It was only after the Amasya meetings that having been unable to achieve anything by means of politics and diplomacy, and observing this respect and loyalty of the people that the Damad Ferid government could reach the stage of showing a reaction, if only limited. If we consider this to augur a change in policy, the decision was taken that in the event of a new attack on any of our towns and villages by the Entente Powers, our military forces would definitely intervene without warning.[28] It was decided, however, not to offer resistance in the event of warning being given. We should nevertheless point out that the most important reason for this limited response was political, economic, and military weakness. Despite all this, we see that following the occupation of Istanbul, the Sultan reverted to his original position: "The disturbances stirred up in the name of nationalism since the Armistice while peace is being approached step by step, have reached grievous proportions and the peace efforts have been arrested." The Sultan commanded that in the event of the insurrections continuing, legal proceedings would be initiated against those who instigated and incited them.[29]

In conclusion, it appears that those who bore the responsibility of ruling the state were inadequately informed about both the people and the resources. As for local voices, they were rarely raised, and even if in the right, were not effective. Those governing the state were also exhausted and dispirited after the long continuing defeats. We observe that with those who understood the people, and believed and had confidence in them making a favourable judgement and acting systematically, they both saved the country and took it forward. But they did not recognize the existent government and chose to make radical changes. Above both these was Said Nursi, who put his person, and the country and nation in second place, and the Islamic world as a whole and its interests in first place. We may say that without rejecting the old or being closed to the new, he understood accurately that the people would fight for the beliefs and dignity of Islam, and would in this way furnish a fine example for all Muslims. His writing The Six Steps in a style that was extremely effective against the pressures of Britain's psychological war and his informing the authorities in reasoned manner of the true dangers are most striking. He explained succinctly that what the British claimed, which on first glance appeared to be true —that they had deserved the calamity, that they were friendly towards other infidels, that those who had governed them up to that time had done so badly, that the Anatolian movement had other aims, that the Caliph's decree had come out in favour of them, and that we could not do alone what we had been unable to do together with unlimited

26. BOA, DH. KMS, 54-2/44, Lef 16.
27. BOA, DH. KMS, 53-2/40, Lef 2.
28. BOA, DH. KMS, 53-2/34, Lef 1-2.
29. *Hatt-ı Hümâyun* (Imperial Decree) of Sultan Mehmed VI Vahiduddin, dated 5/4/1920.

allies— was designed to destroy the Muslims' morale, just as their physical power had been largely eliminated, and aimed at defeating and annihilating Islam and the Islamic world in the person of the Ottomans. We may say that without getting caught up on the details which were not important at that stage, like what the underlying aims of the national struggle and its leaders were, who were trying to prevent this, he supported to the very last saving the honour of the nation and state, and more importantly, that of Islam.

* * *

Ustaz Badi'uzzaman Said Nursi: His Impact on Contemporary Islamic Thinking*

Anis Ahmad

Ustaz Badi'uzzaman Said Nursi (1873-1960) is one of the major architects of contemporary Islamic thinking and movement in Turkey. He never founded himself an Islamic Movement like the *Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, or the *Jamaat-i Islami*. His writing did not discuss a political or economic programme for social change. Yet his contribution in building the Islamic personality, Islamic vision and Islamic awakening in Turkey has been enormous and colossal.

Said Nursi fully shared in the vision of other Muslim reformers and activists in the establishment of an Islamic Community on the pattern of the model society in early Madinah al-Munawwarah. However, his approach towards social change was very much different. In his early life, which he called the life of the 'Old Said,' he had obvious political inclinations. He did support the position of the Society of Union and Progress on constitutional reforms. And even in the latter part of his life, which he called the 'New Said,' he indirectly supported Adnan Menderes in his political programme. However, in his works, namely Risale-i Nur, consisting of about one hundred and thirty parts or sections dealing with important Qur'anic themes, he avoids any discussion on political or economic issues.

Did he call for a sufi way? Was politics a forbidden fruit for him? The question needs to be restated. A better question would be what was his main concern? What was the major and vital issue he thought the Ummah was facing?

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* Original English text.

Ustaz Said could see very clearly that the biggest enemy for contemporary Muslims was from within. In his most eloquent and persuasive style, he puts forth this problem in the following words:

> "My suffering, my only suffering, is from the danger which Islam is facing. To resist these dangers was easy in the past, for they were coming from outside, but today they are inside. Since the rottenness has crept into the body, it has become difficult to struggle against them. I am afraid that the structure of the body will be unable to endure by misconstructing the enemy and assuming the most dangerous enemy to be a friend. The stronghold of faith will be in danger if the society lacks foresight to such an extent. This is what makes me suffer."[1]

Analyzing the rise of Westernization, secularism, and atheism in the Muslim Ummah, Ustaz Nursi made very valuable observations. He said:

> "The world is going through a moral crisis. A pestilential disease has been born in Western society, whose moral foundations have been shaken, and it will spread all over the world in the course of time. By what means will Muslim society oppose this contagious evil? I see the leaders are negligent. The fortress of the Faith cannot be supported by decayed columns of infidelity. I have, therefore, concentrated all my efforts on the cause of the Faith, emphasizing the inner life. Moral existence, conscience, and belief system of the nations based only on the oneness of God and other principles of the Faith shown by the Qur'an make up the foundation stone of Islam."[2]

The immediate concern of Ustaz Nursi was to kindle the fire of *iman* in the hearts of the young generation, who were dangerously exposed to the evil of secularism and atheism.

Apparently all contemporary Islamic movements have one thing in common. They are greatly concerned with the purity of faith. The movement of Imam Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhib, Imam Hasan al-Banna Shahid, or Imam Abu'l-A'la al-Mawdudi have a common point of departure: purify the faith on the basis of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and return to the model Islamic behaviour and personality of the early Muslim community in al-Madinah al-Munawwarah.

Ustaz Said Nursi was not out of tune when he underscored the value and significance of faith. He knew very well that a living vibrant and dynamic faith alone could lead the Ummah to a meaningful future in history.

This does not mean that he was not fully aware of the significance of the other aspects of Islam. Sometimes he used a language which may be interpreted as sufistic. But on closer observation it could be noted that it was only his extreme concern for *iman* which was reflected in his words. He never intended to be a sufi leader nor did he want his followers to be categorized as a sufi *tariqah*.[3] For example he said:

> "I am neither fond of Heaven nor afraid of Hell. May a thousand Said's be sacrificed for the faith of the nation! Heaven will become a dungeon for me if the Qur'an is without believers on earth. On the contrary, I will be pleased and contented to agree to be burnt in the fire of Hell if I know that the faith of the nation is in safety."[4]

1. "The statement of al-Ustad Badee-uz-Zaman Said Nursi in Istanbul," 1952, quoted in Anonymous, *Badee-uz-Zaman Said Nursi of Turkey*, Maryland, U.S.A., Talaba-an-Noor 1974, 66-7.
2. Ibid., 68.
3. Irwin, Cemil Shick, and Ertuğrul, Ahmed Tonak, *Turkey in Transition: New Perspectives*, New York, Oxford University Press 1987, 229.

It reminds the reader of the love-impregnated words of Rabi'ah al-Adwiyah of Basrah, who was neither afraid of Hell nor attracted by Heaven but worked for love of Allah. Ustaz Nursi utilizes all his energies and potential to build the fortress of faith against invading atheism.

In his remarkable Risale-i Nur he writes an epistle on 'Belief or Unbelief: The Results of a Choice,'[5] he deals in detail, at a positive level about the role and place of belief.[6]

> "With the light of belief, man ascends to the highest of the high and attains a value that qualifies him for Paradise... Just as belief illumines man with its light and reads all letters inscribed on him by the Eternal One, so too it illuminates the universe, and takes the past and the future out of darkness."

He asserted:

> "Belief is both light and power. The one with true belief can, therefore, challenge the whole universe and proportionate to the strength of his belief, be developed from the pressure of whatever befalls him. 'I trust in God,' he says, and safely continues his journey on the ship of life in the face of the mountainous waves of catastrophe. ... Belief makes man a real man, even a monarch over the rest of creation."

While dealing with the basic and central issue of belief, *al-aqidah al-sahihah*, Ustaz Badi'uzzaman tries to structure a new *'ilm al-kalam*. The *'ilm al-kalam* dealt with the issues of *'aqidah* in a neo-platonic framework.

Ustaz Nursi, instead of following the old logic and methodology of *kalam* developed a series of simple and direct arguments on the basis of his own study of the Qur'an and Hadith. This is why he keeps stressing that his goal is to let the Muslim Ummah enjoy true faith.

> "My unique goal now is to fight against this atheistic group: in this way I call on all Muslims to come to the path of the Faith, and that is what I am striving for even if I breathe my last in this fight against them. I am afraid that those who will try to detain me from this aim are Bolsheviks."[7]

With a futurist approach, Said Nursi also wanted to establish an Islamic university. His aim was to produce a generation of *nur* youth, who not only know the Qur'an and its message, but also practise it. He proposed this university to be established in Anatolia with emphasis on three languages, Arabic, Turkish, and Kurdish. The university, Medresetü'z-Zehra, as to have provision for traditional Islamic disciplines as well as modern physical and natural sciences. He was of the view that the two parallel traditions, one dealing with purely religious texts and the other dealing with secular sciences was contrary to the interest of Islam.

4. *Badee-uz-Zaman Said Nursi of Turkey*, 68.
5. Nursi, Bediuzzaman Said, *Belief or Unbelief: The Results of a Choice* [trans: Ümit Şimşek], El-Cerrito, California, Risale-i Nur Institute of America 1976.
6. *Belief or Unbelief: The Results of a Choice*, pp. 13, 15, 19, 21.
7. *Badee-uz-Zaman Said Nursi of Turkey*, 69.

He was able to get support from the Sultan, who provided nineteen thousand liras for the project. The breaking out of the First World War delayed the project for several decades. During the reign of Adnan Menderes, there were better chances of its realization, but the government did not provide enough support and the project had to be deferred.

One major contribution of Ustaz Nursi was the production of the Risale-i Nur, which elaborates the Qur'an in a modern language of science. The idea was not new. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan in the Pakistan sub-continent and several writers in the Muslim world had taken a similar approach.

Said Nursi was of the view that Qur'anic explanation must take into consideration *i'jaz al-Qur'an*. His one hundred and thirty *rasa'il* contain proofs of the relevance of the Qur'an in the modern age. These included elaborations of topics such as the situation faced by Sayyidina Yunus and Ayyub, proofs of resurrection, proofs for Allah's presence, sovereignty of Allah, belief in the hereafter, requirements of belief, necessity of *salah*, etc.

He also wrote on Islamic behaviour, for example, inculcation of Islamic brotherhood and mutual respect.[8] A critical review of Said Nursi's writings and personality shows that he did not allow development of the cult of personality. Though, he and his followers were accused of establishing a new *tariqah*.[9]

However, during his lifetime and after his death his following multiplied among the youth, who called themselves *tullab al-Nur*. These students of Nur developed a structure of *halqas* in most of the cities, where the movement of Ustaz Nursi was known through his *Rasa'il*. The *halqas* could attract an attendance from ten to seventy persons at a given time. These followers became so much involved in the writings of Ustaz Nursi that sometimes they even overlooked going to the original sources of the Qur'an and Sunnah. There was a saying of Ustaz Nursi that it was more than enough for them to study thirty-three words. This could be, to some extent, interpreted as a kind of cult. The Ustaz was reported to have said that his *Risale* on thirty-three words, which contained the essence of his message, could make anyone free from many other things and that it was based on the essential truths of the Qur'an. Such a statement was sometimes interpreted by his critics as his desire to establish a new sufi order. It is interesting to see Said Nursi made a very meaningful comment which puts sufism in its proper perspective. He said:

> "A man cannot live without bread, but he can live without fruit. Sufism is like fruit, the truths of the Qur'an is like bread."

Peaceful Struggle

Said Nursi participated in a number of armed campaigns against the British and the Soviets. On some occasions while he was leading Muslim armies against the enemy he was the survivor while all his comrades lost their lives. But Said

8. Nursi, Bediuzzaman Said, *Sincerity and Brotherhood* [Trans: Hamid Algar], El-Cerrito, California, Risale-i Nur Institute of America 1976.

9. Algar, Hamid, "An Aspect of Islam in Contemporary Turkey," in Ansari, Z. I. and Ahmad, K., *Islamic Perspectives*, Leicester, Islamic Foundation 1979, 321.

Nursi did not submit to the invaders nor he made any compromise. On one such occasion he was finally captured by the Russians and taken as prisoner-of-war to Siberia. After spending several years he was able to escape imprisonment and return to Turkey.

However, within the country we find him engaged in a battle of arguments. He was summoned to Law Courts and Marshal Law Courts, practically every other day, during his life. He spent over twenty-eight years of his life in imprisonment. He, like Sayyid Mawdudi, at one occasion, was sentenced to death, but later on his executioners changed it to life imprisonment with all possible torture and oppression. Yet he did not like the use of force. He often defended his own case in Law Courts and used these occasions to spread his message. On one occasion he made the following statement:

> "The truth that we, the students of the Nur School of Culture have learned from the Qur'an *al-Hakim* is that the justice of the Qur'an forbids burning a ship on which there is one innocent person among ten murderers, as the right of one innocent must be protected. Should anyone burn a house or ship to kill ten innocents because of the inclusion of one murderer? Would that not be an act of tyranny, injustice, and perfidy? We wholeheartedly try to maintain public order so that the lives of the innocent may not be endangered because of one person or criminal, for Divine justice and the truth of the Qur'an absolutely forbids this."[10]

The Methodology of Social Change

Ustaz Said Nursi is perhaps unique among leaders of contemporary Islamic movements in suggesting a methodology for social change which does not focus on political struggle. This does not mean he separates between Islam and politics. On the contrary, realization of a true Islamic personality, family and society is his explicit objective. His emphasis and focus on *iman* and development of ethical and spiritual strength should be understood as a methodological priority.

Islamic movements, at a global level, are expected to develop their strategies for social change in view of given situations and, therefore, the model provided by the Makkan and Madinan situations will always provide guidelines in development of this strategy. While Ustaz Said Nursi, according to Ustaz Khalil Hamidi, recommended to his followers the ideas and writings of Imam Abu A'la al-Maududi and expressed his full agreement with the methodology suggested by Maududi, in his remarkable treatise, the Process of Islamic Revolution. Ustaz Nursi expected his followers to use wisdom (*hikmah*) in translating the ideas of Ustaz Maududi in a new space time.

Often, followers of Islamic movements get confused when they try to translate and implement methodology of one movement in a completely different historic context. Ustaz Maududi, when he was asked by a scholar from Malaysia about what should Islamic movement do in Malaysia, spontaneously yet conclusively responded: "The people of Makkah know better how to deal with situations in Makkah." In other words, it was not difficult for him to say I have

10. *Badee-uz-Zaman Said Nursi of Turkey*, 77.

written a book on 'How to Bring Islamic Social Change.' Just take the book and implement it word by word. On the contrary, he wanted people of a country to think, analyze, and review this given situation and decide for themselves a suitable ethical and social change.

Ustaz Nursi's priority should be understood in this context. He knew very well that Islam calls for social as well as political change, but from where to begin and how to break the vicious circle of Secularism, Materialism, and Hedonism occupies his mind and in all sincerity he feels first things must come first and, therefore, emphasis on *iman* makes not only sense but appears the most appropriate methodological step.

This should not lead us to think that he was suggesting some kind of mystical approach in his Rasa'il al-Nur. He has very clearly indicated that he would like to construct a total Islamic society and system and not a partial or limited reform. Commenting on the dichotomy between 'Shari'ah' and 'tariqah' he makes a simple statement:

> "No one can enter Paradise without *iman*, but there will be many who will enter Paradise without *tasawwuf*. One cannot survive without a staple diet, but one can live without eating fruit."

Therefore it is incorrect to think that his emphasis on *iman* creates a mystical approach among his followers.

Ustaz Nursi also waged a *jihad* against the secular wave of nationalism all over the world. He rejected the idea of nationalism based on blood, ethnicity, colour, race or language. His approach was very simple. Looking into the history of Turkish people, he mentioned the on-going process of migration and settlement of Turks and others in the area. He raised the question of how could we determine the purity of blood or ethnicity when millions of people have moved into Turkey and similarly millions of them have moved out of Turkey.

It appears his understanding of the Muslim Ummah was based on his interpretation of the Qur'anic ayah from Surah al-Hujurat which declares very clearly that it is the Creator Himself who has caused human beings to be in tribes and nations, but what makes them superior is their Allah's consciousness (49:13). This approach indicates his deep understanding of the meaning of the Ummah and his desire to see the Muslim Ummah lead others in not only *iman* and *taqwa* but in all possible developmental activities.

The methodology of social change suggested by Ustaz Said Nursi should be taken as a viable model for such situations where the political process may have been frustrated due to internal or external factors. It gives flexibility in developing strategies which ultimately leads us to total change in personality, society and institutions. This makes his ideas fresh, relevant and applicable even after over thirty-five years of his passing away.

A Brief on His Life

Ustaz Badi'uzzaman was born in a Kurdish village of Nurs (due to which he was later on known as Nursi) near Bitlis in Eastern Anatolia. He began his education at the age of nine in Hizan. After finishing his formal education he visited a number of places and ultimately in 1890 took up residence in Bitlis in order to develop a new *'ilm al-kalam*. Later on, he moved to Van, where he wanted to develop an Islamic university on the shores of Lake Van. During the First World War Van fell to the Russian invaders. Said Nursi was also arrested and taken as war captive. He spent about two years in Siberia. During the course he had a very interesting encounter with the Commander of the Russian forces. It is reported that the Commander visited the camp and everyone except Said Nursi stood up. Ustaz Said Nursi told him that his religion did not allow him to stand up for an enemy of Islam. Consequently, he was ordered to be executed. His companions tried to persuade him to offer an apology, but he did not concede. Only desire he made was to be allowed to make two *rakas* before he was killed. The only strength of character and faith greatly influenced the Russian Commander, who came forward and told Ustaz Badi'uzzaman that he had cancelled his orders and that he respected the views of Ustaz Nursi.

The most important period of Ustaz Said Nursi's life begins with his writings, Rasa'il al-Nur, from 1925 onwards. The work began while he was in exile in Barla under very strict watch. From 1925 till 1933 during eight years of his exile, Ustaz Said began the project of the Risale-i Nur. His frequent arrests, court hearings, and travels, exiled from one place to another did not stop him from continuing his interpretation of the Qur'an.

In 1908 Ustaz Nursi was accused of rebellion, which was actually instigated by a shaykh of a sufi *tariqah* known as *İttihad-ı Muhammedî*. He was later on acquitted when the Society of Union and Progress proposed constitutional reforms. Said Nursi supported the call for reforms against the rule of the Sultan. However, later on history proved that the Society of Union and Progress stood for a secular Turkey. When it was evident, Said Nursi shifted his support to the Democratic Party led by Adnan Menderes.

His support of Adnan Menderes did not stop him from criticizing the ruling party. He wrote 'A Guide For Youth' in 1952, in which the beauty and suitability of Islamic dress for women was emphasized. It also called for rejection of the policy of Westernization and secularism in Turkey. Said Nursi had to face the same kind of persecution at the hands of the Menderes government.

On March 23rd 1960 this great scholar breathed his last in Urfa, a place where he had majority of his followers. However, after a military coup, in 1960, the Army authorities fearing that his tomb might become a place of political importance secretly removed remains of his dead body from Urfa to an unknown place.

The message of Said Nursi gained strength with each attempt of persecution on the part of his executioners, which shows that truth can never be suppressed by those who claim power in their hands.

Ustaz Nursi was a symbol of simplicity, humbleness, wisdom, and *hikmah*, which is a necessary character of a *dai'yah*. His ideas were instrumental in development of contemporary Islamic awakening, particularly in the form of establishment of the Justice Party and National Salvation Party under the leadership of Dr. Necmeddin Erbakan, who presently spearheads the Islamic movement in Turkey. Dr. Erbakan has also challenged the forces of secularism, Westernization, and socialism at a global level. It appears that the Islamic movement inspired by the writings of Said Nursi has developed a comprehensive plan for social change. May Allah help the movement in its programmes.

Wa ākhiru da'wanā an il-ḥamdulillāh Rabbi'l-'ālamīn.

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Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: The Middle East Question in the Light of His Cause, Universality, and Understanding of *Jihad*

Muhammad Harb

All Muslims, and especially specialists in Islamic studies, are becoming awakened to the treatises written by the Ottoman thinker, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi. I shall therefore present my views on Bediuzzaman on three main axes.

The First Axis: Why did Bediuzzaman Said Nursi appear at that time and in that place?

Second Axis: The universality of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's cause.

Third Axis: The new scope Bediuzzaman Said Nursi brought to *fiqh*, and his ideas on the new political questions facing the Islamic world. Among these are his views on *jihad*, and the role this approach can take in the current events of the Middle East, five years from the year 2000. The place in international relations of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's views on *jihad*, from the first century to the twentieth.

First Axis: Bediuzzaman's appearing at a particular time and place

Two of the reasons for the decline of the Ottoman Empire, in which Bediuzzaman lived, which concern us closely are intellectual and philosophical factors. These undoubtedly played a key role in the decline. These factors were the

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causes, which are known today also as a conflict of ideas, and which permitted the influx of Western intellectual currents into the Ottoman Empire, influencing the young in particular.

Western thought began to spread within the Empire before its collapse and was a chief element preparing the collapse, which had disastrous consequences for the whole Islamic Umma. This thought became established in the philosophical school.

We can give some striking examples: Islamic thought is very rich in regard to principles of government, based on principles like fulfilling the basic needs of the Umma, consultation, the authorities (*ahl al-ḥall wa'l-'aqd*), and democracy. Although some Western principles of government are similar to those of Islam, some are different. Moreover, the cultural tradition of the Muslim Umma is richer than European culture. Islam's educational system is at an excellent level and certainly has no need of any European system.

What I really want to say is not the above, what I shall discuss is rather the period these ideas entered the Ottoman world. I say that all these developments resulted before and after the Tanzimat in the dominance of Western thought, and even in these ideas entering among the tenets of belief. In consequence, materialism in particular became very widespread. These waves of materialism and philosophy shook the ideas of firstly the Ottoman youth, then after independence, those of the Turkish youth. They sowed in the state the seeds which would later detach people from the Islamic religion.

On this decline becoming apparent, it became necessary, in order to halt these currents of Western philosophy, to put forward an Islamic philosophy in Turkey. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was destined for this duty. His strove with his scholarly analyses to save the youth who had fallen into the trap of Western materialism and atheism, and to draw them back into the fold of Islam. His scholarly analyses of the questions of faith had the aim of re-establishing the tenets of belief in Muslims and humanity. His endeavours in the field of scholarly analyses of the questions of belief were collected together under the name of the Risale-i Nur. However, some people accused the Risale-i Nur of being philosophy. His reply to this was that his intention in using philosophy was to challenge Western materialist thought, which dominated intellectuals and university students at that time in Turkey. It is my opinion that there is great need for the philosophy in Bediuzzaman's Risale-i Nur. in order to combat Western philosophy in Turkey.

Second Axis: The universality of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's cause

Bediuzzaman, the founder of the Nurcu cause, was not concerned with the problems of one specific region; his was a general, Islamic address, directed towards the interests of all Muslims. His point of view and philosophy can truly be called renewal, and Bediuzzaman himself may therefore be given the title of Regenerator of Religion (*mujaddid*). For he encountered innumerable problems in his life, for which he supplied appropriate solutions and interpretations. For example, the problem of anarchy, which this century has spread through the

Islamic world; Bediuzzaman put forward the best remedies and solutions for this. I am not going to discuss these here. Although his works on this subject have been published in Turkish, they have yet to be translated into other languages. It is my view that their being speedily translated will be of great service to the politics, governments, and people of the Islamic world, and to all humanity.

Bediuzzaman's views on democracy and his philosophy are a fresh understanding in the Islamic world. I should point out here that his attitude towards government and state is far removed from responding with anger and hostility.

These works have been translated into Arabic by someone proficient who was not well-known among Muslim translators. With these translations, the Risale-i Nur has reached a level whereat it may enter the broadest gates of Islamic culture and thought. The translation of the Risale-i Nur into Arabic from Ottoman, or I should say, modern, Turkish, will allow the possibility of its spreading throughout the world from Anatolia, I do not say only the Arab world here, I mean all the world. Because like it was formerly, Arabic is today a universal language. Also, I want to say, not that it is the chief unifying language of all Muslims, but that the numbers of readers of Arabic throughout the world is exceedingly high.

For a long time I have been in favour of the Risale-i Nur being translated into Russian, for the Muslims of Turkestan and the Caucasus and the Soviet Union all know Russian. However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the ensuing regional clashes, and the emergence of the Turki republics and rise of nationalism, these new republics have started to revert to their local languages. For example, for the last ten years they have tried to rid the Uzbek language of Russian. With the Risale-i Nur being translated into Arabic, it will have the chance of spreading in Central Asia, Turkestan and the Caucasus and in other communist countries. In this way, Ihsan Qasim al-Salihi's translation will have gained a worldwide opportunity for the Risale-i Nur.

I want to add another new view here: if the Risale-i Nur had been translated into Arabic by the author during his lifetime, a deficiency of great significance would have been removed in regard to the materialist thought that was spreading in the Arab world as it was in the final decades of the Ottoman Empire and in Turkey. It would have given rise to an extremely powerful current of Islamic philosophy to confront Western materialist thought.

I consider of particular importance the translation into Arabic of these works, which cure the problems of the Islamic world and renew Islamic thought, so that Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's cause may spread throughout the world. It would greatly facilitate the solving of all the difficulties faced by states, communities, and individuals, and allow them to profit from it. The best example of this is Bediuzzaman's solving very satisfactorily with these works the problems attendant on things like nationalism, anarchy, and politics.

Third Axis: Bediuzzaman's understanding of *jihad*, and its relation to the Middle East problem

According to Bediuzzaman, there are two sorts of *jihad*, physical and moral or non-physical. He was not in favour of enemies always being combatted with weapons and by force. He explains in the Sixteenth Flash that he inclines more to peace:

> "As for the calamity of war, it would cause great harm to our service of the Qur'an. Since the majority of our most valuable, self-sacrificing brothers are under the age of forty-five, they would be forced because of war to leave their sacred service of the Qur'an and enroll in the army. If I had the money, I would gladly pay the thousand liras necessary to release each of such valuable brothers from military service. With hundreds of my valuable brothers leaving the Qur'anic service of the Risale-i Nur and laying hands on the club of physical *jihad*, I feel a loss in myself of a hundred thousand liras."

It is said in addition to this in the same Flash:

> "Yes, in accordance with a person's way, a club is necessary to form a barrier against the assaults of the unbelievers or apostates. But we only have two hands. Even if we had a hundred hands, they would be sufficient only for the light. We do not have any other hands with which to hold the club!"

The meaning of the above, and this interpretation I have heard from Bediuzzaman's student Mehmed Fırıncı, is that as far as is possible any matters between the enemy and oneself should be solved by peaceful means. For on most occasions such a way is better than a military solution.

These views were put forward before the eruption of the Palestine question.

Cries arise from all the Islamic world now at the war with the Jews in Palestine. The position of the Arab world in general and Islamic world in particular made it impossible to meet with the Jews. The plan for division put forward by the United Nations even was not agreed to by the Islamic world and Arab world. As a result, numerous wars have broken out between the Arabs and Jews, which, with the exception of the last, have resulted in defeat. If Bediuzzaman's views had been applied by them, these conflicts in which they always met with defeat would have been more advantageous for them. I do not say this in order to either corroborate Bediuzzaman's views or oppose them. I am attempting only to discuss them in the light of events to the extent they are related to them.

What is the situation of the Palestinian question now, long after Bediuzzaman's death and following the war with Israil? They have been compelled now to seek a solution by means of peace, to accept an agreement, and to save their lands through diplomacy. For whenever one turns back from human and material loss it is profitable.

This paper is a commentary on the events of the Middle East and the Palestine question in the light of the Sixteenth Flash by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi.

* * *

Bediuzzaman

Ahmad Bahjat

A Symposium has been organized in Istanbul on the regenerator of religion and Islamic thinker Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, who produced a matchless work with the Risale-i Nur, which consists of pieces he wrote for his students and followers. Those taking part have offered discussions of his many sides and activities. Some have considered him as a sufi who opened his heart to the utmost extent to the Creator's signs in creation. Some have presented him as a scholar of *kalām*, who contributed to that science, delivering it from consisting merely of dry logical phrases and infusing it with the freshness of belief. Some discussed him as a literary figure the art of whose discoveries and expression was of a high order. While others described him as a man of action who resolutely withstood the attacks on Islam and endeavoured to preserve the people's belief. And in truth Bediuzzaman possessed all these characteristics and abilities.

Throughout his life Bediuzzaman pursued this struggle, and in one of his treatises described his position like this: the knowledge of God deduced from the proofs of the science of *kalām* is not perfect knowledge; it does not afford assurance for the heart. However, if this knowledge is founded on the method of the Qur'an of Miraculous Exposition, then man may attain perfected knowledge and his heart gain complete assurance.

In the face of the knowledge of the Qur'an, the sufis' way of knowledge is deficient and fruitless. For like Ibn 'Arabi, the followers of the Unity of Existence say: "There is no existent but He." In order to gain a sense of God's (May

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He be glorified and exalted) presence in the heart, they went so far as denying the universe. Whereas the knowledge springing from the Qur'an neither plunges the universe into non-existence, nor condemns it to absolute oblivion. On the contrary, it saves it from futility and neglect and employs its in God's way, making everything a mirror reflecting knowledge of God and opening up in all things windows onto that knowledge, thus gaining a permanent sense of the Divine presence in the heart.

Dr. Muhsin 'Abd al-Hamid, Professor of Qur'anic Exegesis and Islamic Thought in the University of Baghdad considers that Bediuzzaman put forward a new way among the ways leading to knowledge of God. It was a method based directly on the Qur'an which is read, and the visible Qur'an, that is, the universe, and the articulate Qur'an, that is, God's Messenger (PBUH).

The *Mathnawī al-'Arabī al-Nūrī*

Writing has a chief source, which is reading. We can also call this culture. The writer presents the angle of his writing according to his cultural level, his experience, and what he has acquired through his senses, abilities, and faculties. There are exceptions to everything, but generally speaking all books confirm this rule.

Sometimes one reads something and one feels certain that no one has produced its like. One is astonished when one learns that the writer was not an expert in writing. Basically, they cannot make a living from it, or live in that way.

We may give an example of this. While speaking of subtle, brilliant truths, the sufi Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Jabbar al-Nafari did not have them written down. He said that those of his students who wished could write down what he said.

Another example: everything Said Nursi said was a jewel. But very little of what he said, he had written, with few exceptions. For the most part what he said to his students and followers consisted of his treatises. On examining the sources the sufis and regenerators of religion left behind them, we are amazed to see that heroes like these were not understood to be heroes in the true sense. Consider for example the Risale-i Nur, written by the great regenerator Bediuzzaman in the form of letters to his students.

He has a work called *Mathnawī al-'Arabī al-Nūrī*. The Mathnawi is really the work of Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi. As is known, the word 'mathnawi' means couplet, that is, two-lined verses. Rumi wrote around twenty thousand of these in his *Mathnawi*. Later Bediuzzaman came and put the name *Mathnawī al-'Arabī* to the work he wrote in Arabic. The work is not a *diwan* of poetry, but Bediuzzaman chose the name specifically. What did he want to say through this choice, I wonder? I think he wanted to indicate the work's effectiveness on the heart, intellect, soul, and spirit. By its renewing belief and establishing it firmly in the heart and illuminating darkened spirits, it has an effect similar to that of Jalal al-Din al-Rumi's work, which he wrote in Persian. Thus, in order to confirm its conformity to Rumi's spirit, and yet to distinguish it from his *Mathnawi*, he called it *Mathnawī al-'Arabī*. In truth this book is advanced in the art of writing, other writers cannot reach the level of its eloquence.

"What you say is not understood"

Under the heading 'Statement of Intent,' Bediuzzaman says:

> "When I go into a garden, I select the best of it. If I experience difficulty in picking [its produce], I am pleased. When I see something rotten in it, or unripe, I say: 'Take what's best.' I want my readers to be like that too. They say: 'What you say is not understood.' I know that sometimes I speak from the top of the minaret, and sometimes from the bottom of the well. What can I do? That's the way it comes. The one speaking in this book is my impotent heart. The one I address, my rebellious soul. My listener, a Japanese seeker after truth. Those looking on should bear this in mind... "

These words allow us to navigate the seas of Bediuzzaman, for he is an ocean the surface of which is full of stormy waves, while at its bottom are jewels and pearls. Great effort, comprehension, and striving are needed to bring up these jewels to the light of day.

Sometimes his style is refined like the sweetness of spring. Sometimes it roars like a harsh winter storm. At others it weeps together with the skies, and its readers. And at others still, his words diffuse peace and tranquillity. These differing states follow on one after the other in succession like time and the seasons on the face of the earth. Just as man does not rule the four seasons, so there is no question of dominating the sweet flow of his words.

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi says:

> "*Know, O Friend!* Although before the seed became the tree, the egg became the chick, and the seed sprouted, they had the potentiality, amid thousands of possibilites, of taking on thousands of forms and shapes, they retreated from those haphazard possibilities and were driven towards direct, correct, and fruitful shapes and forms. It is understood from this that the seeds were under the direction of the One All-Knowing of the Unseen previously as well, and were being raised by Him. It is as though each of them was a small notebook copied out from the ledgers of Divine Power, or a index taken from Pre-Eternal Knowledge, or a number of principles inscribed from the volumes of Divine Determining."

* * *

The Gesture of Said Nursi as a Challenge to Modernity*

Ahmad Aries

In the West people often complain that the Islam did not develop its philosophical and theological system so that the believer could orientate himself easily in modern times. This opinion does not reflect the whole situation in Islamic societies — whether they are secularized or not. There exists a broad discourse which, however, concentrates on the so-called Western challenges: technical development, medical standards, sciences, unions, social security, etc. The decisive question in the background is whether the Islamic countries could adapt to these standards without being forced to pay the tribute which Western nations paid and do pay, as King Faisal formulated the issue.

No doubt these debates are necessary for the Orient as well as for the Occident. But there exists another level which we should consider. It is the spiritual one. I do not mean laicism or secularism. In this context both western European solutions of a Christian problem just touch on the surface.

I would like to take up the discussion Said Nursi led when he stated that "Belief comes first."

In order to keep his strive for future, it is necessary for succeeding generations to continue his work. And this is not only the published papers, the Risale-i Nur, we have to look also at his gesture, his way of life, and his unshakeable courage to accept the challenges of human thinking. Work and life belong together. They form an integrated unity which is still a provocation; because he was not fascinated by the possibilities of calculability, feasibility, or changeability of worldly events or the world itself. As a Muslim did not get tired to utter that the whole is creation for which stays accountable.

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* Original English text.

No science or policy, however, can define the values behind any accountability... to whom?

Said Nursi's biography and work asked and answered this question without any hesitation: All evidence refers to the ONE. Are we not under the same obligation? I think the Risale-i Nur is not an Islamic museum but a workshop to meet coming tasks. I do hope this Meeting will take up the gauntlet of today's challenges.

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Before starting to discuss the announced question I would like to make two remarks on the point of view I shall look at our problem. The first one refers to my own background. I am a west European intellectual whose roots go back to the Prussian minority and to the sixties of this century. Thus my scientific attitude has a twofold origin.

The second vector is a question: I always wondered why Said Nursi's personality and his work attracted such a lot of people in Turkey but not abroad? His language might have been a barrier, but also his special subject. In contrast to the general tendency to marginalize religious and spiritual issues, our thinker insisted on a discourse which put these themes in the centre of his reflections. "In the view of reality, the most important and the greatest [matter] is the question of belief." In a modern way of expression: man has to acknowledge his anthropological transcendental openness and find his personal answer to it and society should draw its consequences from that.

My translation points to a certain problem. Our respected thinker was moulded by conflicts and differences between technical and scientific development of the western world and the decline of the empire. The coping with this phenomena was a decisive element of his reflections which had some social psychological as well as political aspects. He concentrated himself, however, on the transcendental question in a very special manner which still challenges thinking without having used psycho-analytical terms or the results of social sciences. Modern discourses in humanities, however, cannot be thought in another language than that of these social sciences. In consequence of that there will be a certain tension in my own reflections between the discussion which Said Nursi led and my research — specially for those who not used to applying sociological terms over our thinker's work.

This is not the place to begin with a discourse on the structure of modern, post-modern societies. Therefore I would like to summarize some characteristics which can be found in literature. I chose five perspectives. The first one is the political one. What constitutes the political perspective in (post-)modernity?

1. Any kind and social form of coping by which the individual finds an answer to his anthropological transcendental openness is his very personal challenge and decision.

2. Any form of practised power, rule needs rational grounds.

3. The necessary social co-operation is built up on a minimal set of rules which is represented through human rights.

4. Political power is bound to people's sovereignty.

The cultural perspective may be described by the following aspects:

5. The empirical sciences entered a continuing learning process.

6. The point in all moral and legal discourses is to find generally accepted reasons for social actions and life.

7. Arts are autonomous.

The social perspective has three additional aspects:

8. The capitalistic enterprise is based on rational rendering of accounts.

9. The bureaucratic state administration is built on reliable legal decisions and administrative structures.

10. Societies form nation-states.

The philosophical perspective:

11. Every tradition and norm must be open to questioning and has to be defended in an open social discourse by rational arguments.

12. Group norms have to be substantiated through universal norms.

13. The socialization of a personality, the social structures in which the individual grows up lead to an abstract ego-personality.

Miscellaneous aspects:

14. It is the individual's will to quote whatever he wants to quote and to combine what he quotes.

15. With regard to the multi-cultural structure of societies all non-universal norms are relative. The individual who changes between different groups changes not only his loyalty but also the normative frame of references.

16. The necessary radical openness leads to fundamental unreliability and uncertainty.

17. The individual will stand for the behaviour only which society demands of.

No comment, this scenario is completely different to that which Said Nursi had in mind when he wrote the Risale-i Nur. His thinking was challenged by the contrast between technology and religion, the apparent contradiction of feasibility, calculability, and creation. One of his answers was learning as he thought that knowledge could never stand against belief. Today this question is obsolete. Modernity does not care. It just ignores the possibility that the present world could have been created. Societies as well as research-fellows question a development, a problem or any matter in discourse for its rational reasons. People do not ask for truth but for successful handling. Thus the question of belief or atheism is simply irrelevant.

The generally accepted hypothesis is that man can decide and act without referring to transcendence.

In order to find the answer of our thinker we should not only look to his work but to his life also and the sociological development in the twenties and thirties. At that time the official policy tried to turn society into a worldly nation-state. Said Nursi did not only start to argue against this public tendency but —forced to do so or not— lived the alternative. He turned to the anthropological transcendental openness in writing "The First Word," which was: "Bismillah, In the Name of God, is the start of all things good." In doing so he lived the alternative axiom to the one of public life.

These axioms were:

(a) There is no being beyond human perceptual frontiers.

(b) The existing being reveals itself and is a creator, my creator.

Neither the first nor the second sentence can be rationally proven, but the individual can decide himself in favour of one and thus "close" the anthropological openness.

Said Nursi did not take up any discourse of whether the first axiom could make sense or not; he demonstrated by his life and writing how senseful it is to look at the world as a creation. The Risale-i Nur is full of examples in which he fitted events, scientific results and human experience together to a single proof: the transendental openness can be sensefully closed by evidence: THE ONE does exist.

Thus the citation from above continues in the following manner: "... Just as this blessed phrase is a mark of Islam, so too it is constantly recited by all beings through their tongues of disposition..."

As a Muslim Said Nursi did the only thing possible, he took the verbal revealings as evident predicaments. In Islamic language, one would say: our thinker took the Qur'an as the *Sirat al-mustaqim* through life and world.

From a modern point of view this remarkable decision leads to the consideration why such a movement could happen. A question which leads to life-span developmental psychology. Its research identified puberty as the phase when the individual has to decide on the different aspects of his openness. The range of challenges goes from looking for an own standpoint to the organization and planning of the own life up to the questions: "Who am I? What shall I become?" One moment within this broad range goes to the transcendental openness: "Is there any possibility of a being beyond the bounds of my reason and possibilities of perception?"

We know that it is not necessary to put the question or feel the impact. Man can ignore the fact of his transcendental openness. But if the individual accepts and decides on the subject he/she will influence the statics of his/her identity. The consequence of the acceptance that there is a being, what theologians call "belief," is the acknowledgement of a creator, a creation, and within Islam the acceptance of the oneness, unity etc. of a being, God, Allah. Our thinker therefore demanded to "renew belief by means of 'There is no god but GOD.'" On this background the individual is so embedded in the world that his personality does not move into the direction of an abstract ego-development. On the

contrary the Islamic system of duties can form a structure which resists disembedding. May I remind you of the imprisonments. Said Nursi prayed and brought others to do so. John Lifton showed in his research on the process of brainwashing in which the personality is reduced to substantial structures that turning to one's own transcendental decision erects a wall against attacks.

In post-modern social development the individual changes the circles of identity within hours, days or weeks. Some of them might even belong to quite different cultures; but if the individual has decided on the axiom of Oneness this decision works like an (perceptual) anchor... All beings recite the blessed name.

These reflections refer to a political aspect. Today we know that the liberal state cannot prove the foundations, axioms, on which it is built. More than this, in order to secure its own liberalism the liberal society has to convince its members to decide on their own which axioms will fit as base for their personal lives. Out of such a commitment grows the only chance for a stabilized order. Universal norms and a lot of group norms cannot be enforced completely; between states there exists no force at all which could do so as the political events demonstrate. Who does care? Said Nursi's answer would have been the one which he discussed in his first Words: the hereafter. In his work The Flashes, he wrote:

> "Just as the penalties of those perpetrating small crimes are delivered locally, and serious crimes are sent to the high courts, so too, according to the rule, the small errors of believers and close friends are punished swiftly and in part in this world, in order to quickly purify them. But the crimes of the people of misguidance are so great that since their punishments cannot be obtained in this brief worldly life, as required by justice they are referred to the Supreme Tribunal in the eternal realm, and most do not receive any punishment here."

This does mean that the individual stays accountable even if worldly institutions do not or are willing to give any judgement. A probably ironic reference to Stalin who asked how many divisions the Pope had, or to any long lasting ill behaviour do not meet his argument. The term 'hereafter' based on the axiom of a transcendental being supposes a time dimension which does not transgress lifetime but embeds it like an envelope enfolds a subject. If we look through the contexts in which Said Nursi uses the term we should see that he draws from it a strategy which out-manoeuvres all other positions. Even post-modern attitudes are kept within bounds. You cannot quote without any reference.

If one follows up this construct you might deduce that the autonomy of an artist has its limits. The intellectual and practical problem is who among men decides on the limits. Are these stable or on which conditions do they change?

These questions lead to a central term of modern development: learning.

The statement, sciences have entered a continuous learning process, maintains that no predicament can be taken for sure, right or true. As Popper said: a researcher can just falsify a hypothesis. Thus scholars must always be ready to correct or improve a sentence. A log of research, however, is not done today on the question of truth, but looked at under the perspective whether the proposed hypothesis leads to a successful manipulation which allows a predictable control

for further industrial use. As far as I see, Said Nursi did promote this attitude because he assumed that learning and its results could never come into any contrast against belief. As a Muslim he could not imagine a statement which the Qur'anic frame of references would repeal.

The situation changes if, as the social sciences do, man is treated in the same manner as a natural science subject. With regard to ethical limits social scientists do not do this literally. However, their gesture of observance tend in that direction. This is one side of the coin; on the other we might describe the situation as man observes himself like the Greek Narcissus, who fell in love with himself while looking at his reflection in the water. It is the endless regression of man, who observes how he observes himself and so on. Video-artists have imitated this structure by putting two televisions opposite to each other.

At the same time everybody is forced to realize that the systematic observation of human behaviour revealed some remarkable results on the nature of ourselves, our structures, our growing up, our references and social engagement. As far as I can see, Said Nursi would never have refused to do such a research. But he would have interpreted all results as signs of how conditioned human existence is, conditioned by HIM, GOD.

"The true nature of all beings is mirror-like. They are subject to Divine creation through pre-eternal power." And this is a reference to the Qur'anic verse: *And He is Powerful over all things.*

The result is that whatever the research done connected with the social sciences, it is certain to show us a meaningful facet of His creation.

With this attitude, our thinker makes frequent references to axioms related to human thought, and recalls to everyone their consequences related to thought, behaviour, and action. It is for this reason that his phrase "Belief comes first" is like a constant challenge to modern or post-modern thinkers, who reject the anthropological openness, which has a place in anthropological structures.

Some people consider the phrase to be an attack on secularism or laicism. But to either reject it with modern or post-modern logic, or see it as supporting the spiritual side of the body-spirit distinction, both represent wrong views, even if they appear to offer two completely different solutions to the same problem. These two views surfaced together with the question of who would succeed to the collapsing Roman Empire and who would take its place. It was also the question of whether the political leader would succeed, or the spiritual one. That is, would it be the German king, or the Pontifex Maximus, the Pope? The dispute continued for centuries, and finally Western Europe remained face to face with two solutions:

(a) The Roman Catholics gave this answer: political institutions are compelled to be dominant over spiritual institutions. The course of time brought the result of the present partnership of state and church. But it was a partnership in which the state held clear dominance. And this went as far as severe suppression of any other form of spiritual life.

(b) The Lutheran-Protestant German regions developed the so-called "governmental tolerance" (Toleranz von oben). During the 19th century it changed into a marriage-like partnership which developed into mutual assistance after 1945.

Both solutions were possible because there were two distinct organizations with clear hierarchies and clear structure forms to express power and will. Islamic societies never found a 'breakthrough' to an independent church-like structure, not to mention the Christian possibility of a body under public law, as for example the round about thirty churches in the Federal Republic of Germany did. (Hirtenbrief, Denkschriften, Sozialwerke)

Islam does not know any theological option for a clerical structure of it?. Muslims do not need a theological institution which says who should intercede on behalf of him. The anthropological consequence is that the believer is always confronted with the naked wall indicating to...

If Western Europeans want to understand Said Nursi's attitude and gesture we have to go back to this remarkable condition. It is the *conditio humana Islamica.* Under such a perspective there is no theological difference if someone bows in front of a wall which is part of a prison, a marvellously built mosque, or human existence. Having in mind to answer to the transcendental openness it is just decisive to perform the gesture, i.e. in Islam to pray and recite. It is that that Said Nursi permanently did. He lived the Islamic alternative to the separation of belief and world. At this point I regret that we do not have a biography at our disposal which was written from the psycho-analytical point of view, as Erikson published a work on Martin Luther.

Westerners as well as Muslims often overlook the consequences of a churchless community. As one consequence these believers have to organize another way to hand down belief, traditions, behaviour, etc. One option goes with the family and the other refers to the archetype of the teacher who internalized norms and interpretations as well as history. Such inner directed personalities function like social anchors in times when critical events happen or a society tends to become outer-directed as (post-)modern societies do. At his time when wars turned things upside down, every day behaviour had to change, and heavy losses had to be deplored as well the challenge of foreign visible and invisible, intellectual colonialism, assaults, developments, and intensively inner directed personality becomes easily a symbolic figure. If this individual is endowed with an outstanding intellect, character, and eloquence —as our remarkable thinker was— he will become an outstanding figure. Such an inner-directed character might be looked at as a natural counterpoint to the (post-)modern issue of the abstract ego-personality.

May I summarize my considerations: Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was in himself an Islamic answer not only to the challenges of his time but also a provocation to the years to come.

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POETIC ASPECTS OF THE RISALE-I NUR

Poetic Aspects of The Mathnawi al-'Arabi al-Nuri

Hasan al-Amrani

Introduction

There is nothing making difficult the concept of poetry as defined by Qudama b. Ja'far (260/873-4—327/938-9); in fact it is as clear as the drawn sword. Qudama said: "Poetry are words in rhyme and metre indicating some meaning."[1] This definition is based on the outward form of poetry and the jewel within it has been ignored. Although it is the most widespread definition of poetry, leading scholars of both former times and the present have not favoured it or agreed with it. One of the oldest sources illustrating this is the following anecdote related by 'Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani about Hassan b. Thabit (May God be pleased with him):

> "One day, 'Abd al-Rahman b. Hassan turned to his father, Hassan. He was weeping. He said: 'A bird has pecked me!' Hassan told him: 'Chase it away!' His son said: "It was as though it wrapped itself around my garments." But it was a hornet that had stung him. Whereupon Hassan exclaimed: 'In truth, my son spoke poetry!'"[2]

As 'Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani pointed out, Hassan observed the poetry in his son, 'Abd al-Rahman, or his innate feeling for it. It is true he declaimed nothing in metre and rhyme, but his poetic simile was very fine.

Rhyme and metre cannot help someone without a poetic soul. Hassan's response on a poem by 'Amr b. al-'As being read to him illustrates this: "'Amr

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1. *Naqd al-Shi'r*, 64.
2. *Asrār al-Balāgha*, 191.

is not a poet, but he is very skilful."[3] We can see the same thing in Ibn Salam's (139/873-4—231/8545-6) comments on some verses by Ibn Ishaq: "This is not poetry; at the very most it is a composition in rhyme."[4]

It is well-known that Hassan b. Thabit and 'Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani are the oldest masters of poetry, holding the most distinguished place in the field.

Muslim philosophers have dealt at length with this subject. One of these was Farabi, who said: "According to scholars of former times, the essence of a poem is its consisting of words that are in harmony with themselves and with the subject of the poem. It is not necessary for its other aspects to be equal to this, for they are secondary matters adding value to the poem. The matter of greatest importance is the subject of the poem, and the least important, the metre."[5]

Farabi distinguished between poetry and oratory: "The compositions of the majority of poets of a particular level who utter persuasive words in metre, are thought by most people to be poetry. But they are oratory, in the accordance with the method of oratory."[6]

In one of his works, before mentioning Qudama, Ibn Rashiq (390/1000—456/1064) adds "purpose and intention"[7] (*qaṣd wa niyya*) as a new element. In another place in the same book, he defines poetry in a way that alludes to its content, saying:

> "The reason poets are called poets is their comprehending things that others are not aware of. If a poet does not express a new meaning or find new things or extract fresh meanings from a word, the name of poet for him is metaphorical, not real. All he has done is to say something in metre, which in my opinion is not a virtue but a fault."[8]

Ibn Khaldun says nothing different to this:

> "Words in the *'arūḍ* metre are in fact words in rhyme and metre. What I mean by poetry conforms neither to the structure nor to the appearance of this. The arts they employ in poetry are *i'rāb* (pronunciation of the case endings), *balāgha* (rhetoric), metre, and particular forms. In my view, this has no value. Therefore, we have to make a definition to express the truth of this matter. We say: poetry is an eloquent composition based on metaphor and description, united in all its parts in respect of metre and rhyme, each part of which is independent in respect of aim from the parts preceeding and following it, in conformity with the styles particular to the Arabs."[9]

As is seen from this, Ibn Khaldun starts with eloquence, metaphor and description, then mentions the other elements like metre and rhyme.

Critics and philosophers have taken different sides in this dispute between 'verse' (*naẓm*) and poetry. For we can find verse which contains nothing poetic

3. *Fuḥūlat al-Shu'arā'*.
4. *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 7-8.
5. Fārābī, *Jawāmi' al-Shi'r*, 172.
6. Ibid., 173.
7. *al-'Umda*, i, 119.
8. Ibid., 116.
9. Ibid., 475.

like the versified 'addresses' we noted above in the quote from Farabi. We could compare these with poetic writing which bears no characteristics of verse.

The position of contemporary Western critics on this matter is not remote from this. T. S. Eliot lays not unconsiderable stress on the value of music in poetry, the sound of it. He says that through the sound, the first meaning may call to mind the second meaning.

We may have understood by now that the poetic quality may be found in compositions that are not in verse.

al-Jahiz stated that it is impossible to translate poetry. For such an attempt "would negate the structure of the metre."[10] And I say that poetry that has lost its poetic quality through translation does not deserve to be called poetry. Yet we read Jalaluddin's *Mathnawī*, al-'Attar's *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr*, and al-Khayyam's *Rubā'iyyāt*, and despite our reading them in translation, we feel that the poetic feeling has not been extinguished.

Thus, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was a poet in this sense, despite not having put his writings into verse.

> "Bediuzzaman had the soul of a poet, a subtle spirit, a yearning heart, and a sensitive conscience. He possessed all the qualities of a 'great poet.' Yet he did not write poetry. That is to say, what he wrote was not versified in the way that what poets write is versified. But even if in his work called the *Mathnawī* what he wrote is marked by the characteristics of prose, its spirit is poetic. Besides the profundity of the ideas and subtlety of the meanings, it is full of expressions that please the ear and spirit."[11]

So what are the factors underlying this quality, despite its lacking some of the elements of poetry?

If we keep in view all that has been said so far, discussion of the poetic qualities to be observed in the *Mathnawī al-'Arabī al-Nūrī* assumes great importance. We shall approach the question by way of comparison with Jalaluddin's *Mathnawī*. This is anyway the aim of our paper. Success is only from God.

* * *

In discussing Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's approach to the poetic aspects of any piece of writing, it will useful to point out that his *Mathnawī* contains numerous critical looks at poetry and literature. At the same time, the work contains many original passages that the reader will be able to grasp without hesitation or encountering any great difficulty. This is particularly true of the spiritual supplications he includes in his treatises. Generally at the start of them he makes something like the following statement:

> "The pieces in this Second Station resemble poetry, but they are not poetry; they were not put into verse intentionally. They rather took on that form to a degree due to the perfect order of the truths they express."[12]

10. al-Ḥayawān, i, 75.
11. al-Dabbāgh, Adīb Ibrāhīm, *Mukhtārāt min al-Mathnawī al-'Arabī al-Nūrī*, 13.
12. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Sözler*, İstanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1980, 189 / *The Words* [English trans.], Sözler Publications 1993, 222.

Nevertheless, the pieces following this bear all the characteristics of poetry. Moreover, they are in a form suitable to the *taf'īlāt* metres of al-Khalil, and particularly the *rajaz* metre. The following, written during just such an "ecstasy of reflective thought," corroborates us in this:

Subḥānuhu man yaḥmaduhu'l-ḍiyā' bi'l-anwār
Wa'l-mā' wa'l-hawā' bi'l-anhāri wa'l-a'ṣār
Wa'l-turāb wa'l-nabāt bi'l-aḥjāri wa'l-azhār
Wa'l-jaw wa'l-ashjār bi'l-aṭwāri wa'l-athmār
Wa'l-saḥāb wa'l-samā' bi'l-amṭari wa'l-aqmār.
Tulu'lu'u'l-ḍiyā' min tanwīrihi tashhīrihi
Tamūju'l-hawā' min taṣrīfihi tawẓīfihi
Tufajjiru'l-miyāh min taskhīrihi tadhkhīrihi
Madḥun balīghun bayyina li'l-Qādir
Tazayyunu'l-aḥjār min tadbīrihi taṣwīrihi
Tabassumu'l-azhār min tazyīnihi taḥsīnihi
Tabarraju'l-athmār min in'āmihi ikrāmihi

(*The sparkling of the light is through Your illuminating and making it known;*
The rolling on of the ages is through Your despatching and employing them;
Glory be unto You, how mighty is Your rule!
The flowing forth of the rivers is through Your storing them up and subjugating them;
The decorations of stones is through Your designing and fashioning them;
Glory be unto You, how sublime is Your wisdom!
The smiling of the flowers is through Your adorning and beautifying them;
The embellishing of fruits is through Your bestowal and munificence;
Glory be unto You, how beautiful is Your art!
The carolling of the birds is through Your making them speak and Your avail;
The singing of the rain is through Your causing it to fall, Your bestowal;
Glory be unto You, how vast is Your Mercy!
The motion of the moons is through Your determining, Your planning,
Your rotating them, Your illuminating them;
Glory be unto You, how brilliant Your proofs, how dazzling Your sovereignty!)

This fine piece of reflective writing is thus written in the *rajaz* metre. In addition it displays a colourful sound from the varieties of rhyme. Is this not an example of writing in the *taf'īl* metre, or of the *tanghīm*[13] style, known as free verse. Bediuzzaman did not accord them the degree of poetry; that indeed should be thought of as modesty, should it not? Having said all that, I cannot keep myself from attempting to apply them.

It is logical for literary critics and writers to limit the concept and nature of poetry, to describe the elements of poetic writing and make clear its characteristics and define their position. From their point of view it is naturally necessary that the points to which they attach importance should be conformed to. But it is also true that most of those who achieved an exceptional depth of understanding and revealed various truths have been neither critics nor literary figures in the true meaning of the words. Some have been philosophers, some Qur'anic commentators, some historians, and some sociologists. If we look at the works of the Greek philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, and of the Muslim scholars Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, Farabi, Tabari, Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi, Abu Hayyan al-Andalusi, Ibn Athir, and Ibn Khaldun, and at the works of those who were influenced by them, we shall see how true this is.

13. I have found it more useful to use the comprehensive term *tanghīm*, rather compound terms like *al-shi'r al-ḥurr*, *al-shi'r al-taf'īlī*, and *al-shi'r al-munṭalaq*. See, the introduction to *Mamlakat al-Ramād*.

We may deduce from this that if we consider Bediuzzaman's view of poetry and of the theoretical and applied aspects of poetic writing, we shall not have put forward something new.[14]

As the works he wrote show, Bediuzzaman was a writer, thinker, scholar, and literary figure of broad and profound ideas. He approached many matters as an expert, considering things with a view peculiar to himself in which imitation had no part. He touched on a number of literary questions, bringing to them a new point of view, and allowing his readers to experience a new pleasure. He left behind him an encyclopaedic work of great depth which deals with the pillar of the literature of belief (*al-adab al-īmānī*), and is unprecedented in many respects.

It would be extremely difficult to describe all the literary points Bediuzzaman makes in his *Mathnawī*, so we suffice with discussing a number of questions it is necessary to grasp for a full understanding of his view of poetry.

The writer and the Qur'an

The Holy Qur'an is God's Book, the wonders of which cannot be refuted and the like of which it is impossible to produce. It is a miracle in respect of its manner of exposition. It continues to be a literary source of such stature that no literary figure has been able to produce anything resembling it. Whether earthly or heavenly, this literary characteristic has continued down the ages. Whether Muslim or members of other religions, numerous literary figures have been influenced by it, having reached out to its broad horizons, plunged into its bottomless seas, and have drunk to repletion from its productive rains. Lose yourself in the innumerable literary works that the Muslim scholars have left behind them on the Qur'an's miraculousness. Then see in astonishment how it has affected world-famous writers: the Russian Pushkin, the German Gœthe, the French Victor Hugo, and many more. The Qur'an as though bewildered them, and they proclaimed its greatness with all their strength. The following lines by Gœthe, from 'The Book of the Cup-bearer' in his 'Diwan of East and West,' are a good illustration of this:

14. The term 'poetic quality' (*shi'riyya*) is not a prominent concept in Bediuzzaman's writings. However, he used this form in numerous places in the *Mathnawī al-Nūrī* in a way very close to the present-day usage. On page 178 (of *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, the Turkish translation) he says: "The truths that [Qur'anic] verses speak of are infinitely more extensive and more elevated than the imaginings depicted in poems."

Ob der Koran von Ewigkeit sei?
Darnech frag'ich nicht!
Ob der Koran geshaffen sei?
Das weiss ich nicht!
Dass er das Buch der Bucher sei,
Glaub ich aus Mosleminen—pflicht.[15]

(Is the Qur'an not pre-eternal?
I know nothing of this!
Or is the Qur'an created?
I don't know!
But it is the Book of Books!
That is how I believe in it, like the Muslims do.)

It was Bediuzzaman's firm conviction that the Qur'an was the beginning and the end, and he stressed this at every opportunity. This is to be clearly seen in his literary point of view. The enormous influence of the Qur'an on his literary view and broad understanding is to be seen in many places. An example is this:

> "Know that for as long as I live I shall say as Mawlana Jalaluddin (*quddisa sirruhu*) said:
>
> *"Man bande-i Qur'ānam, agar jān dāram;*
> *Man khāk-i rāh-i Muhammad mukhtāram."*
>
> (So long as I have life, I am a servant of the Qur'an;
> I have chosen to be the dust of the way of Muhammad.)
>
> "For I see the Qur'an to be the source of all effulgence. If there are any virtues in the truths in my works, they are from the Qur'an's effulgence. Therefore, my heart is uneasy unless I mention the qualities of its miraculousness in my works, even if it is only the briefest mention."[16]

For a writer to profit from the Qur'an, he has to identify himself with its spirit, reach out to its luminous climes, and attain to its aims and purposes. Likewise, he has to draw back the veil before the wondrous worlds the Qur'an has revealed and gaze upon them. He should not get waylaid by the outward qualities of the eloquence.

> "But to come to the matter that the Qur'an has left unsaid with its fair pronouncements: Yes, the writers of mankind with their fancies and imaginings have in a way contrarily to its statements, only attributed to the Owner of the Throne a few of the embroideries of the order and some of the meanings of the principles of this magnificent palace called the universe, and its well-established laws and gilded stones and flowered trees; the rest of those heavenly stars they have divided among the dwellers of the earth through the deceptions of the conjuction of minds....
>
> "It is from the Qur'an's looking at the degrees of what is necessitated by thousands of 'stations' and gathering together within its styles all the meanings which reflect the feelings of those it addresses; and it is from the Qur'an passing over seventy thousand veils and penetrating the very depths of spirits and hearts, and with

15. Gœthe, *Le Diwan/West-Ostlicher Diwan*; Paris, Aubier, Collection Bilingue 1950, 230-1.
16. al-Nūrsī, Badī'u'z-Zamān Sa'īd, *Mathnawī al-'Arabī al-Nūrī* [*tahqiq*, Ihsan Qasim al-Salihi] Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1994, 156.

> its sacred address journeying over the classes of mankind, spreading its light and affording familiarity; that every age man fully understands the Qur'an and admits its perfections... That is to say, that mighty book is not something ethereal, slight and superficial; it is rather a brimming sea, an effulgent sun, a profound and subtle book."[17]

The writer and society

As was seen above, literature is a strange mirror showing what lies behind the outward appearance of things, that the Divine truths may be manifested. Thus, what the writer has to do, as a moral duty, is to present his message clearly and whatever the circumstances conform to reality. In no way must he deviate from this or make his writing a means to deviation. For then literature brings society a great evil as well as bringing it guidance. It is not right for a writer to limit all his efforts to liberty and deliverance from bondage. For society has rights over the writer. It is therefore not permissible for the writer to neglect these rights. For all writers are like the hostages of society. We do not even want to think of a writer who ignores the facts about society. His most important duty is to be the ear of society, alert to the dangers and contagious diseases threatening the country. Since it is thus, is it acceptable for writers who have emerged in Islamic countries among Muslims to show lack of respect for the marks of Islam and beliefs of the Muslims? Bediuzzaman calls out to such writers as follows:

> "You have the right to display humility about yourself and repentantly proclaim your faults. But you certainly have no right to smear Islam with your ravings which are the opposite of the marks of Islam and opposed to them.
>
> "Who made you their deputy? From where did you receive the *fatwa*? Where did receive the right to publish your delirious ravings about Islam in the name of the nation of Islam, proclaiming your misguidance? Do not suppose the nation and Islamic community are misguided like yourself! To whom are you trying to sell your misguidance? These are the lands of Islam, not of the Jews. To announce something in the newspapers that the mass of believers do not accept, is calling them to misguidance; it is a transgression against their rights."[18]

Word and meaning

The 'word' (*lafẓ*) and the 'meaning' (*ma'na*), or 'letter' and 'spirit,' is one of the most important questions considered by critics of former times. It has been included in just about all the reliable books of criticism. This is true of all such works written from the second century till the present. An example is Jahiz, who was one of the first in this field, and discussed these matters in most of his works. However, some of those who read his works without sufficient attention imagine that there are contradictions in some of the things he writes, claiming that sometimes he attaches more importance to the words and sometimes to the meanings. Whereas that is not the case at all. It is one of the marks of Abu 'Amr

17. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Mesnevî-i Nûriye* [Turkish trans: Abdülkadir Badıllı], Istanbul, Envar Neşriyat 1980, 373.
18. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Mesnevî-i Nûriye* [Turkish trans: Abdülmecid Nursî], İstanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1980, 80-1.

to mention the qualities of a word in one passage, and to describe in detail the beauties of a meaning in another. The impatient, or those not as patient as Jahiz himself, consider these to be contradictory. However, many sayings attributed to Jahiz are in current use, most of which have been misunderstood or about which forced interpretations have been made. In the following sentence, Jahiz says that meaning is a truth scattered on the road: "Meanings are truths scattered on the road in a way that Arab and non-Arab, nomad and villager, will understand. Their mark is the presence of metre, the choice of words, ease of pronunciation, fluency, soundness of nature and excellence of arrangement."[19] One of the scholars of former times who expounded Jahiz's writings and tried to brush off the crumbs of doubt from him or that were supposed to be thus, was 'Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani. He explained what was meant by 'word' in *Dalā'il al-I'jāz* in particular. In his view, the word was an isolated concept devoid of value. The property of verse that made the nature of the word progress, transformed it from being a hidden world broken off from its surroundings into a world connected with other worlds. This connection assisted in its gaining an existence pertaining to itself, rather than to others.

Critics have used a simile among themselves, which they formulated with the intention of restricting the connection between word and meaning. Ibn Rashiq, a literary critic of the 5th century, said:

> "The word is a body, and the meaning is its spirit. The connection between them is like that of the spirit and the body. With its weakening, they grow weak; with its strengthening, they grow strong —like some bodies suffer defects such as lameness, squinting eyes, blindness, and so on, although the spirit dwells within it. The same is true if the meaning is weak although the word is correct and apt. Like suffering from psychological problems despite the body being sound."[20]

Doubtless, as a person of taste and an exacting scholar, Ibn Rashiq established a sound relation between word and meaning. Bediuzzaman also discussed this relation. Only, he saw some deficiency in the much used metaphor of meaning as spirit and word as body, or thought it did not illustrate the truth completely accurately, for he offered another metaphor, inferring criticism of the above:

> "The words of a literary piece are not its body but its clothes. And its meaning is not its spirit but its body. Its life is the intention and emotion of the speaker. While its spirit is the meaning breathed into it by the speaker."[21]

The above passage shows that the above-mentioned metaphor has been altered and a number of additions made. The alteration is the word being signified by clothes instead of body, and meaning being signified by the body instead of the spirit. The addition is intention and emotion being the reason for spirit being breathed into the text; that is, the meaning being non-existent before the intention. In modern criticism this is called 'the meaning intended by a passage.' For if the intention is not understood, the piece will remain closed on itself, and

19. al-Ḥayawān, iii, 131-2.. See also, the discussion of this by Dr. Iḥsān 'Abbās in his *Ta'rīkh al-Adab 'inda'l-A'rab*, 5th ed. 1986, 98 ff.
20. *al-'Umda*, i, 252.
21. *Mathnawī al-'Arabī al-Nūrī*, 156.

as a result will take on an unintended form. In which case, the message related from the speaker to the one addressed will be lost. For the elements necessary for conveying it will not be present.

If we come to the metaphor being altered by Bediuzzaman into the form of the reality of a body, doubtless the body is everlasting, not transitory. For beings were created for eternity, not transience. True transience does not exist:

> "It is understood from these disposals and works of God that the resurrections of the vegetable realm, and other gatherings together and dispersals in the arena of the earth, are not the prime purpose... These insignificant fruits are sorts of examples and samples the forms and results of which will be dealt with at that great gathering."[22]

Since the body is eternal, what is transitory is its dress. In which case, there is no reason to describe the meaning as the spirit of the word's body. For

> "the meaning does not change on the changing of the body, its remains constant. The shell disintegrates, but the kernal endures intact. The dress is ripped, but the body remains healthy and permanent."[23]

However, the body's continuance does not infer that it is independent of its source. Neither does it infer that it is man's property over which he has disposal as he wishes:

> "Your body, which is like your house, is a trust. And you are a guest. Its virtues are all bestowed and its evils all acquired. All you can say is 'His is the sovereignty, His is the praise, there is no strength and no power save God's."[24]

Since the body is on loan and a trust, meaning too —like the body— is on loan and a trust in the dwelling-place of the body. Thus, this trust is a responsibility loaded on the writer. Only in this can man attain to his true nature and gain true freedom, which is above everything. In this way, he may win the right to bear the title 'lord of all creatures.'

Word and meaning are the two most prominent elements making up speech. But a high level of speech necessitates certain conditions. Bediuzzaman limits the high level of speech, its beauty and power, with four elements: "One is the speaker, another is the person addressed, another is the purpose, and another is the 'position' (*maqām*). Its source is not only the position as literary people have wrongly shown."[25] If we ponder over this question, we will see that modern criticism is not based on these four elements either. A piece of writing does not of itself possess any character just by not containing obscure and various elements. On the contrary, these elements expand its limits as far as "Who said it? To whom did they say it? Why did they say it? In what form did they say it?"[26] A piece of writing comprises a particular thesis and proceeds from a speaker (*mursal*). It also has the one addressed (*mursal ilayh*). And a thesis cannot only be

22. *Mesnevî-i Nûriye*, 43.
23. Ibid., 176.
24. Ibid., 60.
25. *Sözler*, 400 / *The Words*, 443.
26. Ibid.

completed by its purpose being understood. We may list these as speaker, one addressed, thesis, purpose.

The nature of a literary piece acquires form within the limits of these four elements. If one of them disappears or appears in different form, the thesis put forward will be exposed to disorder. If a piece expresses a command or prohibition, it reflects will and power in relation to those of the speaker; it receives strength from his strength and elevatedness.[27] With respect to this, some structuralists reached the wrong conclusion and began declaring "There is nothing except the writing (*al-naṣṣ*)," and quite simply pronounced the death of the author. At the same time, they remained ignorant of the reality of the writing. For undoubtedly, writing does not consist only of a collection of words.

There are relations in a literary piece between the words, grammar, composition, and allusions. The four elements discussed above have also to be taken into consideration. For when they are not present, a piece becomes like a ship which has unfurled its sails to the unknown. Although it seems as though the structuralists killed the author, what it actually means is that they killed the piece itself. For the existence, effectiveness and indication of a piece may only be realized through the 'speaker,' 'person addressed,' 'position,' and 'purpose.' Even if the speaker and one addressed do not change, the piece changes on the purpose and position being different. The latter two may be the same, but the mental state of the one addressed at the time plays an important role in limiting the direction and purpose of the piece. An example is the following Hadith, in which the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Don't perform the afternoon prayer until you reach the country of the Banu Qurayza."[28]

If the speaker and the one addressed change, then they change places. The versification (*naẓm*) of a piece does not change so long as the words do not change. And mostly on the changing of the one addressed, the indication to it also changes. Scholars of rhetoric have drawn attention to a point here and have discussed certain aspects of rhetoric. They discovered that the indication also changes with the change of speaker and one addressed. In this way they distinguished between the true matter and the metaphorical one, including in the form (*ṣīgha*) of the metaphorical matter such things as supplication, entreaties, and orisons. The piece then attains its true place through the speaker.

> "Take, for example, the verse: *O earth! swallow up your water. And O sky! withhold [your rain]* (11:44). That is, 'O earth! Your duty is completed, swallow your water. O skies! No need now remains, cease giving rain.' And for example: *And He said to it and to the earth: Come together willingly or unwillingly. They said: We do come [together] in willing obedience* (41:11). That is, 'O earth! O skies! Come whether you want to or not, you are anyway submissive to my wisdom and power. Emerge from non-being and come to the exhibition-place of my art in existence.' They replied: 'We come in perfect obedience. Through Your power, we perform every duty that You have shown us.' Consider the power and loftiness of these true, effective commands, which comprise power and will, then look at words of men like the following nonsensical conversation with inanimate beings: *Be stationary, O earth! Be cleft, O skies! O resurrection, break forth!* Can the two commands be compared? Yes, is there any comparison between wishes arising from desires and officious commands arising from those wishes, and the command of a commander of real authority? Can there be any comparison between the above words and the effective command, 'Forward march!' of a mighty commander of a vast army?"[29]

27. *Mathnawī al-'Arabī al-Nūrī*, 156.
28. *Sīrat Ibn Hishām*, Ghazwa Banī Qurayẓa, ii, 234, ff. "God's Messenger (PBUH) commanded a *mu'adhdhin* to announce to the people: 'Do not perform the afternoon prayer until you reach the Banu Qurayẓa.'" See also, *Rawḍ al-Uns* by Ibn Isḥāq.

With this depiction, in comparing the Creator's word and that of His creatures, Bediuzzaman also offers an excellent piece of descriptive writing and makes it easily accessible to the reader:

> "How can the angelic, living words of the Qur'an, which inspire the lights of guidance and are the speech of the All-Glorious Creator of the sun and the moon, be compared with man's biting words with their bewitching substance and sham subtleties for arousing base desires? .... Indeed, how can the words of the Qur'an, which are each the shells of jewels of guidance, and each a source of the truths of belief and a spring of the fundamentals of Islam, and have come directly from the Throne of All-Merciful One, and above and beyond the universe, look to man and descend to him, comprising Divine Knowledge, Power, and Will, and being the pre-eternal address, how can its words be compared with man's vain, fanciful, futile, desire-nurturing words?"[30]

Poetry

Bediuzzaman's discussing poetry and the things connected with it like letters and *qaṣīdas* impels us to once again consider the questions of poetry and its qualities. If the poem was true, he attached more importance to it as a whole, passing over its particularities, or he at least set about investigating the realities of existence from the particularities. Bediuzzaman is therefore a conscious poet. He also considered poetry in depth.

Some of his wording may seem dry to other poets. But someone who studies him more closely will be able to place him among real poets, distinguishing between them and the purveyors of fancies who suppose themselves to be poets. How can his words, which in their intensity proclaim their poetry, be thought of as dry? On the contrary, from just about every passage the droplets of poetry flow forth.

Poetry and extra-ordinariness

Bediuzzaman considered poetry to be something out of the ordinary. "The poet's view extends beyond the horizons of ordinary people; he is a person who bows before the vastness and beauty of the universe."[31] For this reason, poetry has great importance. The poet always strives towards the extra-ordinary. But generally, carried away on such poetic marvels and chasing after them, they are

29. *Sözler*, 401 / *The Words*, 443-4.
30. *Sözler*, 403 / *The Words*, 446.
31. Wilson, Colin, *al-Shi'r wa'l-Ṣūfiyya*, 35.

pitifully defeated. "Poetic descriptions of the extra-ordinary are for the most part ordinary."[32] For example, if we glance at well-known names of Arab poetry and compare their cries and descriptions, we shall easily be able to see the difference between them. In their view, poetry has to express awesomeness and extra-ordinariness. One of them said: "Poetry today is writing that is not ordinary or general. If it has to be defined, doubtless it is extra-ordinary."[33]

What Adonis is stating here is what Bediuzzaman discovered at least half a century ago, is it not?

To come to the stage of application, what can we obtain from the leading modern Arab writers? Nothing apart from cold, soulless words. There is no doubt that nothing extra-ordinary may sought from them. At best their poetry consists of meaningless fancies and senseless chatter. This demonstrates the peak of impotence. If what we are seeking is extra-ordinariness, we have to come as close as is possible with the poetic tongue to the realities of existence. How can someone who always bows to the idols of custom and makes himself captive to their sins reach anything beyond the ordinary? How can a person who is observedly limited and bound to this world, —in keeping with the observation "Arab poetry today is firmly fastened to this world so that it may be described as 'earthly poetry,'"[34]— break through the chains of custom and catch hold of elevated poetic qualities? Extra-ordinariness from the poetic point of view can only be produced by someone sufficiently powerful to rend the veils covering this worldly life and so discover the essential truths within it. Otherwise he will be condemned to a limited view and will be unable to see such truths. Just like the example given in the Holy Qur'an: *They know but the outer [things] in the life of this world; but of the end of things [the hereafter] they are heedless* (30:7).

Those heedless of the hereafter are at the same time heedless of the reality of this world and its inner face, which is tied to its outer face. It is in no way possible for such people to attain to extra-ordinariness. At the very most they can feel a desire for it.

The truths connected with extra-ordinariness are belief in motion, action and change; and to a small degree, tranquillity, constancy, and imitation:

> "Change occurs in things known as contingent. That is, their qualities and states change. Being idle due to arrest and the absence of activity is a sort of non-existence for something contingent. And non-existence is terrible suffering and pure non-existence. There is, then, a pleasure in activity. Qualities and states also change, and even if the suffering and grief arising from this change are in one respect ugly, they contain also several aspects which are beautiful."[35]

Thus, true poetry gives importance to universals and is concerned with particulars only if a way to the universal is found in them. The best form of exposition is that which avoids detail, only alluding to it summarily through hints or signs.

32. *Mesnevî-i Nûriye,* 178.
33. Adonis, *Muqaddima li'l-Shi'r al-'Arabī,* 139.
34. *Muqaddima li'l-Shi'r al-'Arabī,* 129.
35. *Mesnevî-i Nûriye,* 174.

The Qur'an's manner of exposition is thus. It tends to vagueness in the sense of conciseness, and does not look favourably on detail.

> "If you ask: 'Why does the All-Wise Qur'an not speak of beings in the same way as philosophy and science? It put some matters concisely, and some it speaks of in a simple and superficial way that is easy, does not wound general feelings, nor weary or tax the minds of ordinary people. Why is this?'... The ordinary people, who form the most numerous class, want guidance which is concise with unnecessary things beings vague, and which brings subtle things close with comparisons, and does not change things which in their superficial view are obvious into an unnecessary or even harmful form, lest it causes them to fall into error."[36]

Poetry and discovery

Modern writers state that the thesis of a poem is "the discovery of a world that needs discovering."[37] This truth was also stated by Bediuzzaman a long time previously, who said that the essence of poetry should be discovered and revealed. But what discovery and revelation is this? This is where the paths diverge. The sea quite simply divides into two, with fresh, potable water on one side, and undrinkable salt water on the other. In Bediuzzaman's view, with his comprehensive attributes, "the aim of man's creation is to discover and display the hidden Divine treasure, and to be a transparent mirror to the manifestations of pre-eternal beauty through being a proof and evidence and translucent place of reflection of pre-eternal power."[38]

By reason of his humanity, the poet is called on to be a revealer and discoverer. The means of poetry are means of discovery and revelation. His tongue is "the tree of words."[39] See, what fruits will this tree yield?

Poetry as a mirror

One may speak of the theory of the mirror in art generally, and particularly in poetry. Perhaps it was first Plato who used such a metaphor, in order to illustrate his own theory of resemblances (*muḥākāt*). However, art portrayed through resemblances is only third class. An event visible in the World of Archetypes by way of resemblance is reality. And art is nothing other than the similitude of a visible event. In such a case, a likening is done for the sake of it. And so, art and particularly poetry is nothing other than a mirror reflecting the outward appearance of the world of sensory perception, which is distant from the World of Archetypes. This presents us with an unreal form of things. To illustrate this, Plato gives the well-known simile of poetry being a mirror reflecting events. From that time to this, numerous literary schools have used this simile. In one respect, the theory of reflection is no different to that of Plato —however much the material point of departure here is entirely contrary to the theory of the

36. *Sözler,* 226 / *The Words,* 251.
37. This expression belongs to the French poet, R. Char, and is quoted in the foreword to Adonis' work *Ramz al-Shi'r.*
38. *Mesnevî-i Nûriye,* 169.
39. Ibid., 168.

Platonists. In the same way, "You should take a mirror in your hand and point it in all directions; you will be able to depict the sun, all the bodies in the skies, the stars, and even yourself and other humans, and the animals, plants and other beings."[40]

It is in this way that artists have not succeeded in going beyond reflecting things in their own mirrors, and have put before us not the reality of beings, but merely their outward appearance.

Bediuzzaman, however, in addition to apparently preserving the simile and comparison, favoured a completely different method. In his view, poetry was not an abstract depiction of resemblances divorced from reality; relating the outward appearance of beings without reflecting their inner face was deficient. For this reason Bediuzzaman made poetry one of the means of attaining to elevated truths. If poetry was to be a mirror, it was not to be one reflecting events only, but one in which was manifested Pre-Eternal Beauty and contained deathless reality. If this face of the mirror is nullified or suffers a blow, it will deviate from its path and its function will fall into disuse, and as a result, "the tree of words" will spread out branches everywhere in malign fashion.

> "This visible world is a Divine shop and store. Within it are every sort of woven cloth, food, drink, and sherbet. Some are heavy, some are fine, some are perishable, some are lasting, some are solid, some are liquid, and so on. Every sort is found in it."[41]

If a poet cannot distinguish between the dense and the fine, the perishable and the lasting, and cannot present his poetry as a pure essence, what value does it have?

The worst side of the matter is that in order to save the structure, some non-Muslim modernists have recourse to 'the other' (*al-ākhar*). As though constructing it is not through understanding the structure but by removing it. "In this way, 'the other' is an important element of formation since it is an element of the discovery of knowledge."[42] Since this 'other' is powerless to perceive its own structure, how can it be an important element in discovering knowledge? Moreover, there is no need to interpret it in order to understand it. For this reason the above writer (Adonis) says plainly about 'the other': "This originates from the West."[43] Let us take a look at the view which sanctifies 'the other' and make a comparison between it and the investigative gaze Bediuzzaman employs when considering things. Having discovered the reality of the connection with 'the other', Bediuzzaman describes poetically its being "the work of the infidel West"[44] as follows:

> "The difference between the infidels' civilization and that of the believers [is this]:

40. Plato, *The State*, 264.
41. *Mesnevî-i Nûriye*, 168.
42. Adonis, *al-Naṣṣ al-Qur'ānī wa Āfāq al-Kitāba*, 15.
43. Ibid., 15.
44. Ibid., 16.

> "The former is a ghastly savagery dressed in the raiment of civilization. Outwardly it shines, inwardly it scorches. Its outer face is adornment; its inner face, filth; its form is familiar, its character, an inverted satan.
>
> "The latter is a beautiful angel which is outwardly light and inwardly mercy; whose inner face is love, and outer face, brotherhood; whose form is mutual assistance and character, compassion.
>
> "As belief and the affirmation of Divine unity (*tawḥīd*) necessitate, the believer sees the universe as a cradle of brotherhood; and the bond binding men and especially Muslims together is again only brotherhood. For belief deems all believers to be brothers, like brothers living together under the wing of a compassionate father.
>
> "As for unbelief, it is so chilly it expels even brothers from brotherhood. It sows seeds of strangeness in everything. It makes everything hostile to everything else. If in the patriotism [of unbelievers] there is a brotherhood, it is temporary, and tied to and limited by eternal separation. The virtues and great industrial advances to be observed in the infidels' civilization have all been borrowed and reflected from Islamic civilization, the guidance of the Qur'an, and the [other] revealed religions."[45]

Bediuzzaman used the metaphor of the sun and the mirror the same as Plato used it, only he described both as prisoners. This stems from the mystery of repetition. There is a great distance between the two. For Bediuzzaman interprets things differently, in respect of the manifestation of their reality. He says:

> "There are some foolish people who because they do not recognize the sun, start to love the mirror if they see the sun in it. With intense emotion they try to preserve the mirror so that the sun within it will not be lost. Only on realizing that the sun does not die when the mirror dies and does not pass away if it is broken, does that idiot direct all his love to the sun in the sky.
>
> "O man! Your heart, identity, and essence are a mirror. The intense love of eternity in your nature and heart were not given for that mirror, nor for your heart and self. Your love should rather be for the manifestation of the Enduring One of Glory which is in the mirror according to its capacity; although out of stupidity your love's face has turned somewhere else. Since it is thus, say: 'The Enduring One! You are the Enduring One!' That is, since You exist and are eternal, non-existence and transience can do what they like, it has no importance!"[46]

Imagination

Poetry is not some commonplace utterance; it differs from prose. We are not going to enter upon a discussion about which is superior here, but we should point out that literary critics have differentiated between poetic writing and oratory. The difference between these lies in poetry being based largely on imagination and the purpose of oratory being persuasion.[47] "For this reason, the most correct view of poetry is not whether or not its introductory passages are true or false; it should be seen as the product of imagination."[48]

45. *Mesnevî-i Nûriye*, 81.
46. Ibid., 160.
47. For further details, see, Ḥāzim al-Qarṭajānī, *Minhāj al-Bulaghā' wa Sirāj al-Udabā'*, *Manhaj al-Thālith*.
48. Ibid., 63.

Bediuzzaman stated that the imagination was one of man's most expansive faculties.[49] Nevertheless, "the imagination cannot comprehend the intellect and its fruits."[50] The scope of the imagination is different to that of the intellect. The imagination cannot be restricted by anything. It has the power to wander about on the outer fringes of the world of the intellect. Since it is unrestricted, it cannot be illuminated in any way, and as a consequence deviates into numerous errors. Because of this mobility —since it cannot be limited— it is not included among the means of perceiving reality. "The truths [Qur'anic] verses mention are vastly more extensive and elevated than the imaginings poetry describes."[51] From this is understood the difference between condemned imagination and commended imagination.

> "Every sense has its particular worship. To use them in a way contrary to this is misguidance. For example, if a prostration made with the head is for God, it is worship; if it is for something else it is misguidance. Likewise, the prostrations of love and wonderment the poets have made with their imaginations are misguidance. An imagination that does this is depraved."[52]

Doubtless, while depicting the way of the Qur'an's guidance with these lines, Bediuzzaman is differentiating between the poets who have been excessive in their imaginings and fallen into misguidance as "those who wander through every valley and say what they have not done," and the rightly-guided poets "who believe, do good works, remember God frequently, strive against tyrants, and reach victory." For they adhere to the truth, never turning away from it. They accept no obstacle to the truth among themselves or between the links of association, which is an element of imagination. On the contrary, they may perceive through their belief in the World of the Unseen and the Manifest World, things that others may not perceive. Here we may recall the four elements of exposition Bediuzzaman put as conditions, and reading the following lines of Nabigha al-Ja'di, find ourselves in the Prophet's (PBUH) presence:

"We have reached the sky with our honour and limits
And doubtless we shall be blessed with passing beyond it."

Apparently, this is excessively fanciful, for the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Where to?" Finding a delicate way out, the poet replied in a way that a poet with no belief in the hereafter certainly would not have answered. He said: "Together with you to Paradise, O Messenger of God!" As a favour to the poet, and in order to emphasize that what he had said was not imagination, the Prophet (PBUH) said: "*Insha'llāh*. Yes, God willing."

49. *Mesnevî-i Nûriye*, 60.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid., 178.
52. Ibid., 179.

Poetry and obscureness[53]

If exposition is a virtue, poetry and prose are equal in this. As we stated before, poetry has its own particular language to take it to the heights. This language, therefore, cannot always save it from obscureness. But within this obscureness is a transparency that sometimes opens up horizons before you, and passing beyond the manifest realm reaches the World of the Unseen by way of an illumined spiritual purification under the guidance of revelation. Since it is thus, one should not be surprised at some of Bediuzzaman's words being obscure, as he himself did not deny. But in explaining his position, Bediuzzaman gives the reasons for this. He gives six reasons, the most astonishing of which is his addressing his own soul, which he described as cunning, and his giving swift answers to the questions that his soul asks, if only implicitly. Bediuzzaman employed symbolism to a great extent. But as we shall see, he did not make this symbolism a dark cave containing undiscoverable secrets.

The second matter is the fact that symbolism proceeds from the Qur'an. It is because this has been continuously used that its mysteries have been revealed. It is as though it is a way taken by the Qur'an particularly in order to make its effulgences accessible.

The third reason is that Bediuzzaman avoided addressing his readers in flowery language or simplifying matters in order to satisfy them. He attaches no importance to artificiality, which in truth is an evil, although it is imagined to be good by some people. Thus, he kept his soul free of some of the dirt of egotism.

Then, his words are words of the heart more than of the reason. And words of the heart are always in need of establishing a sort of partnership with the conscience, so that the heart may receive pleasure in a way that not everyone may easily do.

On the other hand, Bediuzzaman opposed the familiar styles of his predecessors. The scholars of jurisprudence (*fiqh—fuqahā'*), the religious scholars (*'ulamā'*), and sufis are equal in this respect. He brought this about by combining the lights of the reason and of the heart in extremely sound fashion. In this, he departed from the way of 'the people of reason,' the scholars of the past, and the way of 'the people of the heart,' the righteous of the past.

Doubtless poetry does not have to give you all its keys or to divulge all its secrets. The pleasure in it will always draw you to discover them. As a result, the pleasure in it will not diminish and will not be comprehended. Just like the example of the sun; its lights and mysteries will never be completely comprehended. Poetry is like a garden. There are trees in it with low branches and high branches. "Are you going to abandon all the fruits in an orchard because you cannot reach some of them?"

Finally, intellectual certainty may be attained only by means of proofs, argument, and demonstration. Spiritual journeying is far from logic, proofs, and reasoning. So one should not be surprised at some of the secrets of poetry remaining hidden because of obscureness.

53. For further details, see, *Mathnawī al-'Arabī al-Nūrī*, 318.

Poetry and Sufism

Poetry and sufism are like twins. Both are inner struggles to discover the unknown, which is not readily perceived, and rend the veils. In both are the awe and wonder the traveller and poet of this way will encounter. The languages of poetry and sufism are parallel in a way others do not really know. Both contain symbolism, allusions, and signs rather than the address people are generally accustomed to among themselves. But this should not make us say that poetry is "obscure since it is a discovery and vision. It is hesitant and not logical."[54] Poetry has to contain its own logic in regard to being discovery and vision, and this particular logic prevents it from being so obscure as to be incomprehensible. In this way a poetic liveliness becomes apparent which is open to interpretation. It may be open to many meanings without the text of the poem being open to interpretation to the extent it puts itself in the background, and without the basic purpose being abandoned.

Poetry and sufism are a form of inner, essential striving that adds a particular pleasure to life. For they are directed to traversing this Manifest World and embracing the World of the Unseen. Without doubt, a life that has lost the taste of striving has lost its meaning. At the same time, comfort is striving. But I do not mean outer comfort, which has the meaning of laziness, idleness and indifference, and expresses certain death. For fixedness is death and change is life. And life is action and death is silence. "A comfortable life finishes man from the spiritual point of view, just like pests that eat plants."[55] The poet yearns for eternity, like the sufi, and eternity is first perceived in oneself. As William Blake said: "The door to eternity opens from the atom's centre."[56]

Sometimes the relation between poetry and sufism reaches such a pitch that one may say that poets are sufis, and sufis are poets. Such people have left us poetry in which we can easily find wonders. Islamic culture is abounding in examples of these. We could mention Ibn Fāriḍ, al-Hallaj, Ibn 'Arabi, Farid al-Din al-'Attar, and the two from Shiraz. One cannot mention them all by name. In his *Mathnawī*, Jalaluddin al-Rumi offers witnesses for the meeting of poetry and sufism. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi testifies to it in many places in his work *Mathnawī al-'Arabī*, so named because of his admiration for Jalaluddin. Bediuzzaman's use of the same name was enough to express his admiration. Ihsan Qasim al-Salihi, who edited the *Mathnawī al-'Arabī al-Nūrī*, wrote:

> "Bediuzzaman originally gave the name *Rasā'il al-'Arabiyya* or *al-Majmū'a al-'Arabiyya* to these treatises. Written on the title page of the first edition was *Qaṭarāt min Fuyūḍāt al-Furqān al-Ḥakīm*. But then Bediuzzaman gave it the name *Mathnawī*, so that it might arouse in hearts, minds, and spirits, an effect similar to Jalaluddin al-Rumi's famous *Mathnawī*, which was widely read among the people; and particularly because it had appeared in Turkey; and so that it might renew the belief in people's hearts, as had the *Mathnawī*, and raise to life disbelieving spirits. He called his work the *Mathnawī al-'Arabī* in order to distinguish it from the *Mathnawī* of Rūmī, which was written in Persian."[57]

54, *Ramz al-Shi'r*, 15.
55. Wilson, *al-Shi'r wa'l-Ṣūfiyya*, 8-9.
56. Ibid., 34.

On the other hand, poetry has to strive to reveal the truth in a way that is not contrary to absolute reality. The same is true for sufism. Certain principles are necessary in this respect, otherwise the straight path will be deviated from. The aim is not astonishment in poetry and sufism; this is only one of the emotions showing the straight path. It is also not a practical way. Whenever astonishment becomes the goal and the main purpose, the poetry loses its substance and purity, as does sufism. Then it becomes merely a means of amusement and passing the time. Its value, subtlety, and attraction vanish at the same time. If in the event of that occurring, sufism still preserves the straight way, it will assist the poem. If the poem deviates from the straight way, sufism will form an obstacle preventing it.

For sufism is to be annihilated in the essence. For this reason, there is nothing to necessitate that experience of the essence remains as individual experience. On the contrary, surrendering the human essence should be the aim, so to reach the collective personality.

In this way, it is necessary to distinguish between Islamic sufism and deviant varieties of sufism. There has to be a scale by which to gauge a sufi's observations, so that he may distinguish between guidance and misguidance. Bediuzzaman mentions the Illuminists, who tried to penetrate to the inward aspects of things, and the spiritual ones who penetrated the World of the Unseen, then makes the following point:

> "For since their views were restricted, they could not comprehend absolute reality. They could find only one side of reality, then they started to manipulate it to excess or deficiently. They therefore disturbed the harmony and spoilt the balance. For example, a number of men dive to the bottom of the sea to discover some priceless treasure containing every sort of jewel. While searching the sea bottom, the hand of one encounters a long diamond. So he surmises that the treasure contains only diamonds of this sort. Then on hearing one of his friends speak of other jewels, he imagines that they are embroideries of the diamond that he has found. Another of them finds a spherical ruby. And another finds a jewel of a different sort. And so on, each believes that the treasure consists of the sort he has found and that what his friends have found are superfluous to the treasure and of secondary importance. By taking on this form, the balance and proportion are lost. So then they start making forced and false interpretations in order to discover and explain the truth of the matter. Some even go so far as denying the treasure."[58]

As Hazim al-Qartajani said, the poet does not consider his poetry from the point of view of truth and falsehood; he rather looks on it as something imaginary. The question of imagination, which we discussed above, should not contradict the reality of things. The Aristotelian school assigned poetry a place more important than philosophy and considered it to be truer than history if it bore this characteristic. If that is the case, the poet's senses must be ever alert, his inner ear open, his mind illuminated, and he should not confuse events. Is poetry not at the same time a wearying journey like sufism?

57. *Mathnawī al-'Arabī*, Muqaddimat al-Muḥaqqiq, 7-8.
58. *Mesnevî-i Nûriye*, 123-4.

"One who journeys on God's way encounters many stations, degrees, states, and veils, each of which possesses particular conditions and circumstances. One who confuses these, proceeds in error. For example, someone hearing the neighing of a horse in a stable, hears the exquisite song of a nightingale in a palace. If he cannot distinguish between the song and the neighing and seeks the neighing from the nightingale, he will have misled himself."[59]

Poetry and symbolism

Symbolism is one of the well-known devices of poetry. Just as there are many sorts of symbolism. In poetry, giving importance to form (*ṣūra*) is one of the aspects of symbolism. Form is the lowest of the degrees on which rhetoric is based. It is included among the variety of metaphor which is made by giving numbers of examples, as though it was the highest of the forms of simile, allusion, and rhetoric. Some literary critics even considered metaphor to be a necessary condition of poetry, and wrote extensive discussions on the subject. Some symbols are close and some distant. The symbol performs a duty like a single flash, opening up boundless horizons.

While using a symbolical style, Bediuzzaman does not mislead his reader, or bewilder him. On the contrary, he takes him kindly by the hand, leading him to the light of truth so that all aspects of misguidance and scepticism may be lifted from him. Thus, symbolism is not the aim; it is one of the means of expression which should not exceed its function. Let us listen to what Bediuzzaman says: "Friend! The world has three faces."[60] You may feel that he is calling you to the world with these words. But first ask yourself: "What are these three faces? How many faces does the world have? What points to them?" Bewilderment is one of the most important elements of discovery, for it leads to the door of questions that will banish doubt being opened. However, the importance of these questions is measured by their being questions in the true sense. So bewilderment forms one of the stages on this road. In this way, the answers to these questions will follow on one after the other in easy succession:

"***The first*** looks to the hereafter, for it is its seed-bed.

"***The second*** looks to the Divine Names, for it is their school and work-bench.

"***The third*** looks intentionally to itself. It thus looks to man's desires and fancies and the demands of this fleeting life. If one looks at the first two faces through the light of belief, the world becomes like Paradise. Its third face is its transitory face which has no essential value or importance."[61]

Symbolism is the shared tongue of poetry and sufism, and is one of the most effective styles Bediuzzaman uses. In the fourth treatise, *Qaṭra Min Baḥr al-Tawḥīd* and particularly in *Dhayl al-Qaṭra*, it is at a very high level from the point of view of symbolic literature and that of belief (*īmānī*). Even if the symbolism here is contrary to the spirit of superficial description of subjects as a totality as in ancient Greek mythology, and even if it remains outside the subject,

59. Ibid., 122.
60. Ibid., 72.
61. Ibid.

it still is not a question of padding out the text with florid expressions. Just as symbolism is considered to be nothing more than an external embellishment in most modern poetry. It is not true art to bring together historical allusions or the worlds of the words without their being any connection in poetic experience. Bediuzzaman displays a transparent understanding of symbolism and stresses the renewal of spiritual (*qalbī*) vision rather than physical vision. This vision is the same as the following lines, which came to a poet of former times at the moment of a spiritual purification:

Wa mā kānat wa in rafa'at sanāhā
Liyubṣiru ḍaw'ahā illā'l-baṣīr.

(If its sublimity was not exalted
Only those with insight would see its light.)

Symbolism does not deny the apparent, since it is the food and drink of the foremost of these persons. As those who appeared claiming to be esoterists (*ahl-i bāṭin*), its relation with the inner face of things is imaginary. The ancients and the moderns, poets and sufis, are the same from this point of view. For however much they claim the contrary, such a denial means a negation of the truth. They say: "Sufi experience opens up an horizon different to that opened up by reading [the Qur'an]. The Qur'an gains for a person various and rich dimensions."[62]

The symbolism Bediuzzaman Said Nursi understood and used in his works is a visual, transparent symbolism based on the comparison of conditions. In this way, with praiseworthy imagination, he brought together the luminosity of the Unseen and the clarity of the Manifest. Our explanation so far is sufficient; in fact it has been prolix. Let us listen to the first '*Ramz*' of the *Dhayl al-Qaṭra*:

"It is commendable to perform the obligatory prayers as soon as the time is entered imagining the Ka'ba before one. For one may see the rows formed around *Baytu'llāh* (the Ka'ba) like concentric circles. The near rows encircle the Ka'ba and the distant rows encompass the World of Islam. By entering those rows one may be included in that vast congregation, and its consensus and unanimity may be a proof of everything one says in the prayers."[63]

Beginning in this way from familiar subjects in faithful, confirmatory and even stern style, Bediuzzaman reaches the reader in a logical way that addresses his reason, consciousness, and conscience. He brings together acuteness of thought and the subtlety of poetry. In this unique manner, he enters upon the poetry of the text.

"In some types of prose there is symbolism. One may approach these with poetic symbols, on condition the difference in kind is not ignored. From form and circumstance to the general nature of the art of expression, all are related to metaphor (*isti'āra*) and take their name from the figurativeness of things."[64]

Various aspects of Bediuzzaman's view of poetic symbolism are similar to other poets, and some aspects differ. This is particularly true of the many

62. *al-Naṣṣ al-Qur'ānī wa Āfāq al-Kitāba*, 30.
63. *Mesnevî-i Nûriye*, 69.
64. 'Āṭif Jawda Naṣr, *al-Ramz al-Shi'rī 'ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, i, 1978-86,

subjects Bediuzzaman discovered through observation. He is very desirous to illuminate those he is addressing concerning these, not put them to sleep. However, his observations are not physical or visible; they are non-material and to be perceived with the heart. He says: "Friend! I am going to mention a few truths I saw during an imaginary journey I made under the earth."[65]

Bediuzzaman describes as follows some of the things he encountered on the way:

> "Impelled by Divine Determining *(qadar-i Ilāhī)* I set off down an exceedingly strange road on which I encountered numerous misfortunes and enemies. But tendering my impotence and poverty, I took refuge in my Sustainer. Pre-eternal grace made me surrender to the Qur'an and made it my instructor... Every word and phrase recorded in this treatise indicates a victory I won. The truths it contains were written at such a level that they disallow their opposites even the possibility [of opposing them]."[66]

Hasty readers might understand something different from these words. But Bediuzzaman's intention —a mark of Divine grace— from these symbols is to invite us to read them more carefully.[67]

However, if this observation is non-physical, it may only be made with the consciousness in such a way that the poet does not neglect his reason. It is not claiming that creation is lost in the vision of the Creator. He frequently uses phrases like "That is how I observed it and my reason was together with me [that is, was fully operative]."

The intellect or reason being present is one thing, and the evil-commanding soul being present is something else. In order to pass beyond the latter, there is constant need of isolation. The first stage is to be divested of the desires and pleasures of the soul. The realization of existence is possible through the non-existence of existence. Bediuzzaman concurs with Muhammad Iqbal on this point, who considered the realization of true 'selfhood' (*khudī*) was to be sought through the way of self-abnegation, that of 'selflessness' (*bīkhudī*). "If you want existence, be annihilated; then you may find it."[68] Perhaps Jalaluddin Rumi is saying the same thing with the lines:

Don't suppose I say these words of myself;
When in a state of conscious wakefulness, my lips can utter not a word.[69]

If the reason has to be present, it is; this is an accepted fact. But he is calling on it to recognize its message and limits so that it may be possible to reach the light of truth. Thus, this recognition emerges as a sort of being burnt:

O reason! You are like water, and I in my own world;
Or I set light to it in order to boil together in our pot![70]

65. *Mesnevî-i Nûriye,* 60.
66. Ibid., 45.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid., 63.
69. *Mukhtārāt min al-Shi'r al-Fārsī, qaṣīda: al-Ṭā'ir al-Qudsī* [Trans: Dr. Muḥammad Ghanīmī Hilāl], 204.
70. Ibid., *qaṣīda: 'Ār al-'Aql*, 207

In order to attain to knowledge of God, then, the reason has to 'boil' in the pot of love.

The reason is the companion of philosophy and wisdom. However, for reality to be manifested at the highest degrees, it is in need of the heart. Then the absolute may be reached from the limited. It is also in need of being burnt in order to attain to poetry of the highest level.

Truth without the kindling of love is philosophy;
It becomes poetry on being ignited by the heart.[71]

Bediuzzaman is not a poet in the usual sense of the word. He left behind him no *qasidas* in particular rhyme and metre.[72] He had command, however, over all the means of poetry. He offered a literature of belief in poetic forms which shake the conscience, please the ear, stir the consciousness, set fire to the mind, and allow the imagination to plunge into the seas of a boundless world.

The symbolism of the nightingale and the rose

Most of the symbolism Bediuzzaman uses is his own and has not previously been used by others. This however does not prevent him from coming together with the majority of symbolical poets on a number of points. He employs their symbolism in the appropriate places. He may at the same time renew a single symbol with a sign. In fact, there have been debates and differences of ideas about this. The symbolism of the nightingale and rose has been widely used in works of the East by Persian, Arab, and Indian poets. There has been detailed discussion of it, but here we shall suffice with merely a hint. The nightingale is a mourning lover, the rose an elevated beloved. The nightingale is the seeker. The rose is a truth told as poetry for which the seeker-lover burns and is tormented. Through it he enters upon the way of ecstasy and excitement. One of the poets who recounted this story, both from a broad perspective and in detail, was Muhammad Iqbāl. He wrote the following in his *qasida Ṣadr al-Shā'ir*:

Ṣadr al-shā'ir mujallā sirr al-ḥusn
Tushriqu min sīnā'ihi anwār al-ḥusn
Min naẓaratihi yazdādu'l-'udhb 'udhūbata
Wa'al-ṭabī'a min siḥri bayānihi aqwā fitnata
Wa min nafathātihi ta'allama'l-bulbul al-taghrīda
Wa min khiḍāb damihi ishta'alat vajnat al-vardati
Mārihu fī af'idati'l-farrāshāt
Wa'l-'ishq afnayn min asāṭīrihi.[73]

(The poet's heart is burnished by beauty's mystery;
From his breast irradiate lights of beauty;

71. Ibid., *qaṣīda: al-Ḥikma wa'l-'Aql* (Muḥammad Iqbāl), 448.
72. This did not prevent Bediuzzaman writing a number of invocations in Persian and in a versified form which are splendid specimens of poetry. This is particularly apparent in his Arabic work *al-Nūr min Anwār Nujūm al-Qur'ān*, which he described as "an ecstasy of reflective thought." His use of the word "*jadhba*— Turkish, *cezbe*) recalls a sufi atmosphere. In other sections, he offers examples of free verse in various forms. He also included some pieces in the *rajaz* metre.
73. *Mukhtārāt min al-Shi'r al-Fārsī*, 446.

From his glance flows ever-increasing sweetness;
The magic of his words is powerfully attractive;
From his breaths the nightingale learnt to sing;
From his spilling his blood the rose's cheeks are aflame;
The moths' hearts are all atremble;
In which of his stories is this love?)

There is nothing arbitrary about the neighbourliness between the nightingale and the rose. It alludes to the well-known story. It is the nightingale sacrificing its own blood for the rose, and its blood made the rose's cheeks red as fire. But this is not all that is related. The poet is teaching the unhappy nightingale what to sing. and this may only be achieved by the poet's burning in the fire of true love. If this is achieved, a fire will burn in his breast (*Ṭūr al-Sīnā*), and after loading this blessed fire in his breast, many wondrous works will emerge from it.

The following lines are from Iqbal's poem *Kalimat al-Ḥubb*, in which he works the story of the nightingale and the rose a second time.

Tilka al-kalima jadhwat al-qalb, hiya sirr wa lā sirr
A faḍaytu bihā ilayka, fa-man dhā istaraqa'l-sam'a? Wa min ayn sami'a?
Qad saraqahā'ṭ-ṭall min al-samā', ufḍī bihā ilā'l-warda
Wa sami'ahā'l-bulbul min al-warda, wa ḥamalathā'l-ṣabā min al-bulbul.[74]

(These words are firebrands of the heart; they are a well-known secret;
Shall I tell you of them? Who wants to hear them, and where?
The pattering rain stole them from the sky and whispered them to the rose;
Then the nightingale heard them from the rose; and the morning breeze wafted them away from the nightingale.)

The love between the nightingale and the rose was never considered to be a secret, for it is a beam of Divine light stretching between the heavens and the earth.

Bediuzzaman included the story of the nightingale and the rose at the end of his *Mathnawī*, commenting on its philosophy, and bringing together the form and content of poetry with a fine wisdom.

> "For example, the All-Wise Creator employs the famous nightingale, renowned for his love of the rose, for five reasons: it is the official employed to proclaim in the name of the animal species the intense relationship that exists between them and the plant species... It is a dominical orator from among the animals, who are like guests of the All-Merciful One needy for sustenance, employed to acclaim the gifts sent by the All-Generous Provider and to announce their joy... It is to announce to everyone the welcome offered to plants, which are sent as a succour to his fellow animals... It is to announce, over the blessed heads and to the beautiful faces of plants, the intense need of the animal species for them, which reaches the degree of love and passion... It is to present with a most acute yearning a most graceful glorification inspired by a most delicate face like a rose to the Court of Mercy of the All-Glorious and Beauteous and Munificent Lord of All Dominion."[75]

74. Ibid., 454.
75. *Sözler*, 328-9 / *The Words*, 364.

This dominical orator, the nightingale, is nothing other than one of the aspects of the universe's glorification of God. For every species of creature has its nightingale which the universe's Creator teaches how to proclaim to all the other creatures the pre-eternal bounties He has bestowed. He has made their glorifying the way they perform this duty. And the cadences of its song never flag, rising until they reach the Lord of Creation, Mustafa, Upon whom be blessings and peace.

> "However, do not suppose this proclaiming and heralding and these songs of glorification are peculiar to the nightingale. In most species there is a class similar to the nightingale that consists of a fine individual or individuals which represent the finest feelings of its species with the finest glorification and finest poetry. ... But the most excellent, the most noble, the most luminous, the most dazzling, the greatest and the most honourable nightingale, whose voice was the most ringing, whose attributes the most brilliant, whose recitation the most complete, whose thanks the most universal, whose essence was the most perfect, and whose form the most beautiful, who brought all the beings of the heavens and the earth in the garden of the universe to ecstasy and rapture through his subtle poetry, his sweet song, his exalted glorification, was the glorious nightingale of human kind, the nightingale of the Qur'an: Muhammad the Arabian, Upon whom and upon whose Family and those who resemble him be the best of blessings and peace."[76]

The symbolism of the mirror

Use of the mirror and its symbolism by philosophers has been extremely widespread, so too has it been frequently employed by poets. We see that from Plato even to Bediuzzaman the mirror and its indications have limited the nature of poetry. Sometimes the mirror reflects truths and reality, sometimes it shows only forms.

Sufi poets have been among those who have used this type of symbolism, both in respect of close indications, and far indications. The mirror has sometimes been a bridge to knowledge of the Essence. As Anwari said:

I gazed at myself in the mirror;
I received a multitude of advice from my comb.[77]

At the same time, the mirror is the place of manifestation of the microcosm and macrocosm. These places of manifestation are all of different degree.

Some poets gave examples in a way that corroborated this usage in Hadiths of the Prophet (PBUH), like "The believer is the mirror of the believer." Mawlana Jalaluddin incorporated this very successfully in one place in his *Mathnawī*, chosing the title "Mirror" (*Mir'āh*).

Yā man tushāhidu al-ẓulm sānidan bayn al-nās
Inna miḥnataka min miḥnatihim, yā hādha,
Fifīhim yatarā'ī wajdaka anta,
Min nifāq wa ẓulm wa 'arbada.
Inna dhāka'l-insāna hūwa anta,
Wa dhāka'l-adhā innamā turāsihi binafsika,

76. *Sözler*, 329 / *The Words*, 365.
77. *Mukhtārāt min al-Shi'r al-Fārsī*, 165.

Wa ḥaqqa an tu'lina fī tilka'l-sā'ati nafsika.
Alā tarā 'ayānā hādhā'l-sharra min dhāti nafsika?
Wa illā fa anta, idhan 'adūvvi dhāti nafsika?
Fa'l-mu'minūna ba'ḍahum li-ba'ḍin mir'ātun,
Kamā warada fī'l-khabari 'an al-Nabī.[78]

(You who witness oppression among the people,
Your being tested is a test for them too;
They find you among them and watch you,
Out of their oppression, tyranny, and tumult.
That person is surely you,
Yet you are inflicting this torment on yourself.
However much you curse yourself at this time, it would be right.
Do you not see that this evil springs from your own soul?
Or is it that you are inimical to yourself?
For the believers are mirrors to the believers,
As it says in the saying of the Prophet.)

The mirror is not only a means of reflecting forms, things, and realities, according to some writers, it removes the boundaries between source and the reflected, expressing a unity comprising the effulgences reflected in it. As Ibn Abu Khayr said:

Innī anā waḥdī al-'āshiq wa'l-ma'shūq wa'l-'ishq fī muntahāhi
Wa innī anā waḥdī al-'ayn al-mubṣiratu wa'l-jamāl al-zāhī wa'l-mir'āt.[79]

(I am myself both lover, and beloved, and love in its furthest extremity;
I am myself both the seeing eye, and bewitching beauty, and the mirror.)

Bediuzzaman gave great importance to the mirror example in respect of what it shows, and used it frequently. His method was to use the image, by which he meant the Manifest World, to open up people's perception, so that they might see the truths expressed symbolically about the World of the Unseen. He wrote concerning this:

> "There are certain foolish people who because they do not recognize the sun, if they see it in a mirror, start to love the mirror. With intense emotion they try to preserve the mirror so that the sun within it will not be lost. Whenever the foolish person realizes that the sun does not die on the mirror's dying and is not lost on its being broken, he turns all his love to the sun in the sky. He understands then that the sun seen in the mirror is not dependent on the mirror, nor does its continued existence depend on it... O man! Your heart, identity, and nature are a mirror. The intense love of immortality in your nature and heart should be not for the mirror, nor for your heart and nature, but for the manifestation of the Enduring One of Glory, Whose manifestation is reflected in the mirror according to the mirror's capacity."[80]

The mirror is therefore a means of reflecting reality, not imaginings. However, the mirror does not have to have any connection with the things it reflects. It may merely point to the image it reflects. For both the mirror and the image are doomed to final annihilation. Only the reality will endure.

78. Ibid., 202.
79. *al-Ramz al-Shi'rī*, 167.
80. *Mesnevî-i Nûriye*, 160.

This simile, which Bediuzzaman gives a second time, based on the example of the mirror, corroborates what we have said. Here, he is not inviting you to see its connection with the images of reality or its reflections or manifestations, but its direct connection with reality. He says:

> "If you have a mirror in your hand which you hold up to a house or a town or a garden, the image of the house, town or garden will appear in the mirror. If the tiniest movement or smallest change occur to the mirror, the images become confused and distorted. The fact that the actual house, town or garden outside the mirror continue and are constant is of no avail to you, for the house in the mirror in your hand and your town and garden are only in the scale and proportions which the mirror gives you. Your life is the mirror. The support and mirror of your world and its centre is your life. Every minute it is possible that the house and town and garden will die and be destroyed, their condition is such that any minute they may collapse on your head and your doomsday will come. Since it is thus, do not burden this life and world of yours with loads they cannot raise and support!"[81]

The symbolism of the sun

One of the symbols most frequently used by Bediuzzaman is that of the sun. As is known, in sufi culture the sun is a symbol for femininity. The moon is not the equivalent of this. In sufi literature, the mirror and the sun are both interpreted as the source of existence and absolute fertility. It therefore should not be thought strange to link the mirror, like the sun, with creation. Although the symbolism of the mirror is virtually non-existent in Bediuzzaman's works, that of love is used in various forms and styles. Most of these are linked to the Source of creation. We could only find anything similar in other writers by making interpretations so forced as to turn them inside out. We are thus called on to say the following to them by reason of our impotence:

Fa-kāna mā kāna mimmā lastu adhkurahu
Fa-ẓunna khayran wa lā tas'al 'an al-khabar.

(Something happened that I had not mentioned;
It was supposed to be good, so don't ask about it!)

In one respect Jalaluddin Rumi mentions the mirror in the same way as Bediuzzaman. In his view, it is creative, a source, luminous, sacred, and free of the density of earth. He says:

al-mir'āh shu'ā' min al-nūri'l-aqdas
Wa laisat bi-gharāḍ li'l-raghbati'l-ḥissiya
Lidhan yanbaghī an yuqāla innahā khāliqa
Li-annahā laisat.... makhlūqa.[82]

(The mirror is a ray of the most holy light;

81. Ibid., 136-7.
82. *al-Ramz al-Shi'rī*, 150.

Its purpose is not some emotional wish.
Should it be said, then, that it is creator?
For it is not ... created.)

In his *qaṣīda*, *Madīnat al-'Ishq*, Jalaluddin endeavours to reach out to the furthest horizons of an infinite world from the captivity of limited emotional interpretations. He says:

Qāla ma'shūq li-'āshiq: Ayyuha'l-fatā
Anta qad ra'yta fī ghurbatika mudunan kathīra
Fa-khabirnī: Ayya madīna min hādhihi aṭyabu?
Fa-ajāba: Tilka'l-madīnati'llatī fīhā min ikhtaṭafa qalbī
Wa inna la-aṭyabu min al-dārayn dhāka al-makān
Haythu unāla fīhi su'alī, yā Ilāhī, bi-haḍratika![83]

(The beloved said to the lover: Young man!
You've seen many cities in your exile,
So tell me, which of them is best?
He replied: This city, where my heart was wrested from me.
Surely this is the best place in the two worlds,
Where my request was granted, O God!, to be with You!)

The likening of the beloved to the sun is customary among sufi poets. They describe the sun in legendary terms, as a symbol alluding to the One of Absolute Beauty. Ibn 'Arabi, known as al-Shaykh al-Akbar, one of the sufis, also used the symbolism of the sun for this purpose. Due to its illumination, he found a pleasure in this symbolism; it interpreted his insights and visions. For this sun resembles no other. The poets said in connection with this:

A laisa maṭla'uhā qalbī wa maghribuhā qalbī,
Fa-qad zāla shu'm al-bān wa'l-gharb.[84]

And in another place, he wrote:

Wa qālū'l-shumūs bi-dāri'l-falak
Wa hal manzil al-shams illā'l-falak.
Idha qāma 'arsh alā sāqihi
Fa-lam yabqi illā istiwā'l-malak.[85]

In Ibn 'Arabi's view, the sun was not directed towards the mirror; the mirror was directed towards the sun. It was from this truth that the Pre-Eternal Beauty might be reached.

At the same time, Ibn 'Arabi gave his shaykh's daughter the name *'Ayn al-Shams wa'l-Bahā'*, making it a symbol for sufistic yearning. In his work, *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq*, he writes about the daughter of his shaykh, Abu Shuja' Zahir b. Rustam b. Abi Raja al-Isfahani: "Among scholars she is known as a sun, among poets, as a rose-garden."[86]

83. *Mukhtārāt min al-Shi'r al-Fārsī*, 200.
84. *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq*, 170.
85. Ibid., 183.
86. Ibid., 8.

As mentioned above, Bediuzzaman frequently used the sun as a symbol, but in a way differently to his predecessors. Similarly, he did not relate this symbol to the mirror in haphazard manner, describing it in general terms. He rather related —as manifestations— all instances of beauty directly to the Pre-Eternal All-Beauteous One, and all instances of glory to the Absolutely Glorious One. For he always made connection with the Ever-Enduring One, avoiding attachment to transitory beings.

In his view, "An enduring beauty could not be content with a transient lover."[87] For this reason, the affirmation of Divine unity is a sun;[88] the Qur'an is a sun;[89] Prophethood is a sun;[90] a righteous scholar is a sun;[91] God is a sun.[92] Thus, Bediuzzaman was also forestalling any tendency to forced interpretation of the sun, or any misguided excesses.

Further important proofs of the poetic quality of Bediuzzaman's writing are the versified supplications he wrote sometimes in Persian, and in particular metres. Sometimes he expresses these as a string of melodious sentences in Arabic. They are mostly to be found scattered throughout the *Mathnawī*. There is much need for studies of this work alone. Insha'llah, in the near future I shall find the opportunity to complete this present paper, making it more comprehensive.

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87. *Mesnevî-i Nûriye*, 38.
88. "If a person wants to sun his body from all six directions, he will either turn his body in every direction before the sun, or he will draw the sun to him over that long distance and turn it around his body. The first shows the facility of *tawḥīd*; the second, the difficulty of unbelief." (*Mesnevî-i Nûriye*, 71)
89. "Prophethood is a seed from which emerged the tree of Islam together with all its fruits and flowers. The Qur'an too, like the sun, which produces the fruits of the travelling stars, produced the eleven pillars of Islam..." (*Mesnevî-i Nûriye*, 78)
90. "The One reciting that Pre-eternal Address is a living sun who revealed the universe's perfections. He is giving the good news of eternal happiness..." (*Mesnevî-i Nûriye*, 23)
91. "Let us turn back to note the effulgences the centuries succeeding that Being received from him. See, friend! In all those centuries, thousands of light-scattering stars like Abū Ḥanīfa, Shāfi'ī, Abū Yazīd, Junayd al-Baghdādī, 'Abd al-Qādir Gīlānī, Imām Ghazālī, and Muḥyiddīn al-'Arabī, have parted from that sun and illuminated the world of humanity." (*Mesnevî-i Nûriye*, 26)
92. "God's disposal over his creatures is merely through will and a command; He does not have direct contact; like the sun gives light to the universe." (*Mesnevî-i Nûriye*, 100)

The Poetic Quality of the Risale-i Nur

Muhsin Kalkışım

One of the most eminent figures of the 20th century in the fields of belief, reflective thought, and action was Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, whose approach to art and poetry had a number of realistic qualities. In this paper, I shall attempt to discuss the poetic qualities of the Risale-i Nur and Said Nursi's comments on poetry.

1. Poetic style

For the most part, Said Nursi's works were works of inspiration, like Mawlana's *Mathnawi*. He explained it like this: "The truths and perfections in the Words are not mine; they are the Qur'an's and they have issued from the Qur'an."[1] It is completely natural that the close relation between poetry and inspiration should be reflected in the Risale-i Nur Collection. Its treatises were dictated on the battlefield, in mountains, and in prisons to his students by an author who himself had poor handwriting and no books with him other than the Qur'an. The fascinating eloquence of his words, from the writing out of the Risale-i Nur to its being read, has left a deep mark on the broad masses of society. Şerif Mardin says that Bediuzzaman's literary idiom is allusive and figurative, and that the convolutedness and obscurity of his style is not without a

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1. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Mektûbat*, Istanbul, Sinan Matbaası 1958, 404 / *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Letters 1928-1932* [English trans.], Istanbul, Sözler Publications 1994, 434.

hypnotic power.[2] Cemil Meriç likened the Risale-i Nur to a stormy wind.[3] While Sezai Karakoç emphasized the effectiveness of its voice and style, and said "The Risale-i Nur is on its own a compendium of Islamic culture."[4] And two short passages from the Risale-i Nur:

> "On receiving the single command of that Single One, in rapturous joy at its duty, a single soldier like the earth rises to revolve in two motions like an ecstatic Mevlevi dervish, and is the means of those splendid results being achieved."[5]
>
> "And belief showed with utter certainty that the only fruit at the top of the tree of life was not a corpse as had appeared to my neglectful eye, but that my spirit, which would manifest eternal life and was designated for eternal happiness, would leave its worn-out home to travel around the stars."[6]
>
> "The modern historian Vico was one of the first thinkers to point out that the dynamic of human behaviour has greater affinities with poetry than with mathematics. Said Nursi's appeals have a charm which derives from an intuitive understanding of this quality."[7]
>
> "...I had an innate desire for immortality, directed not to my own immortality, but to the existence, perfection, and immortality of that Absolutely Perfect One. But due to heedlessness, my innate love had lost its way, become attached to the shadow and enamoured of the mirror of immortality."[8]

Mardin sees Said Nursi's idiom as a synthesis between the old and the new:

> "A methodological point which is of key interest for an understanding of the way in which Said Nursi's idiom worked is that morality as command depends on discursive resources whereas morality as means of finding an integration with the cosmos is dependent just as much on semiotic resources, i.e., on the resonance created in the individuals by these symbols. Said Nursi's discourse contained resources of both types. This is where he had a superiority over the more orthodox Islamic reformists."[9]

Said Nursi employed prose more than poetry, adopting a Qur'anic style as his model. Certainly, the style of an author who pondered over the book of the universe, becoming one with all beings from atoms to the galaxies, would reflect rhythmic qualities based on the repetition of sounds. Although what he wrote is not poetry in the classic sense, his sentences, possessing an inner harmony, are loaded with literary arts, and put the listeners into an aesthetic trance:

> "By the contriving of a sustainer most generous and bountiful, most munificent and solicitous, a ruler who regulates and disposes, it mounts the wind and taking with it treasuries of rain each as heavy as a mountain, hastens to the aid of the needy. It is as if it were weeping over them in pity, with its tears causing the

2. Mardin, Şerif, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursî Olayı: Türkiye'de Din ve Toplumsal Değişme* [Trans: Metin Çülhaoğlu], Istanbul, İletişim Yayınları 1992, 62, 63, 280.
3. Meriç, Cemil, *Bu Ülke*, Istanbul, Ötüken Yayınları 1979, 192.
4. Karakoç, Sezai, *İslâmın Dirilişi*, Istanbul, Diriliş Yayınevi 1975, 32.
5. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Lem'alar*, Ankara, Doğuş Matbaası 1957, 303 / *The Flashes Collection* [English trans.], Istanbul, Sözler Publications 1995, 419.
6. *Lem'alar*, 215 / *The Flashes Collection*, 294.
7. Mardin, Şerif, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursî Olayı*, 279.
8. *Lem'alar*, 237 / *The Flashes Collection*, 322.
9. Mardin, Şerif, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursî Olayı*, 287.

flowers to smile, tempering the heat of the sun, spraying gardens with water, and washing and cleansing the face of the earth."[10]

"The Qur'an imparts such a joy and loftiness to the spirit of its students that instead of the ninety-nine beads of the prayer-beads, it places in their hands the minute particles of ninety-nine worlds displaying the manifestations of the ninety-nine Divine Names, and tells them: 'Recite your invocations with these!'"[11]

"For sure, to make one thing everything, and everything one thing is a sign, a mark, peculiar to the Creator of all things, the One Powerful over all things."[12]

In the words of the thinker Cemil Meriç:

"It came from behind the stout walls of the ordinances of religion, this voice; it was coming from inside history: it awoke hundreds of thousands of people who had retreated into their shells. As he spoke, those imaginary people were realized."[13]

The intensity of Bediuzzaman's poetic expression varies among the styles he employs (the *mücerred*—simple; *âli*—high; *müzeyyen*—embellished) in accordance with the subjects he is discussing.

II. His poetry

Despite stating in numerous places that he was not a poet and that the door of poetry was closed to him,[14] Said Nursi sometimes expressed the inspirations that came to him in the form of Turkish and Persian poetry. At the beginning of a poem about the stars, he apologizes to the reader: "However it occurred to me, that is how I wrote it. You, my heir, may transform it into poetry and set it to verse."[15] While in the Second Station of the Seventeenth Word, he says the following, showing he makes no claims to writing poetry:

"The pieces in this Second Station resemble poetry, but they are not poetry. They were not put into verse intentionally. They rather took on that form to a degree due to the perfect order of the truths they express."[16]

At the beginning of his work *Lemeât*, which he wrote one Ramadan in order to expound his aphorisms entitled *Hakikat Çekirdekleri* (Seeds of Reality) in a prose style which resembles verse, he says: "A short *Mesnevi* for the Risale-i Nur students, and a *divan* on the subject of belief."[17] He says too: "Anyone who wishes may read it easily as prose without thinking of the versification,"[18] showing that *Lemeât* is didactic and was written in a philosophical manner. The lines resemble rhyming prose sentences:*

10. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Asâ-yı Mûsa*, Istanbul, Sinan Matbaası 1958, 97-8.
11. *Lem'alar*, 109 / *The Flashes Collection*, 164.
12. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Sözler*, Istanbul, Yeni Asya Neşriyat 1993, 42 / *The Words* [English trans.], Istanbul, Sözler Publications 1993, 49.
13. Meriç, *Bu Ülke*, 192.
14. *Sözler*, 208, 634 / *The Words*, 233; *Mektûbat*, 19 / *Letters*, 38; *Barla Lahikası*, Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1990, 178.
15. *Mektûbat*, 19 / *Letters*, 38.
16. *Sözler*, 188 / *The Words*, 222.
17. *Sözler*, 633.
18. *Sözler*, 635.
* The translation is not in rhyme. [Tr.]

"It is completely unashamed at these three sorts of its fiction, like the theatre with its reincarnations and the ghosts of the vast grave known as the past.

"It has put a mendacious tongue in mankind's mouth, attached a lustful eye to its face, dressed the world in a scarlet petticoat, and does not recognize sheer beauty."[19]

Bediuzzaman's poems other than *Lemeât* are to be found in the Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Thirty-Second Words; the Fourth and Sixth Letters, and the Third Ray. Their shared characteristic is their all being written in free metre. Also, in some of the poems, the effect of *aruz* is to be seen. For example, in the poem that begins "Cry not out at misfortune, O wretch, come, trust in God!" and the one entitled "A Fruit of the Black Mulberry" in the Second Station of the Seventeenth Word, the metre (*mefâîlün / mefâîlün / mefâîlün / mefâîlün*) is used.

Also in the Seventeenth Word, apart from a few exceptions, the lines entitled "The First Table" and "The Second Table" are in the metre (*mefâîlün / mefâîlün / mefâîlün / mefâîlün*). In the first two couplets of the poem at the end of the Eighteenth Word, we see the metre (*mefâîlün / mefâîlün / feûlün*). While the first five couplets of the poem in the Addendum of the First Stopping-Place of the Thirty-Second Word, which begins: "Look upon the coloured page of the book of the universe," are in the metre (*fâilâtün / fâilâtün / fâilâtün / fâilün*). While in the poem *Eddâi* (The Supplicant) in *Lemeât*, is (*mefâîlün*).

The below couplets furnish an example of "pure poetry," distilled from a Qur'anic source and crystallized within the possibilities of Turkish:

"The tears of a heart weeping in the pre-dawn in captive exile, stained by separation

The breeze of manifestation wafts in the dawn;
Awake, o my eyes, in the early dawn!
Seek grace from the Divine Court;
It is dawn; the time for sinners to repent.
Awake, o my heart, in the pre-dawn!
Repent, seek forgiveness, today, from the Divine Court!"[20]

III. Quoted poems

One may see from the poems Said Nursi quoted that he concerned himself with poetry. In the Risale-i Nur there are quotes from important poets of Turkish, Persian, and Arab literature. This shows that as a renewer, Said Nursi had not broken off from tradition: (Turkish) Süleyman Çelebi, Yavuz Sultan Selim, Fuzûli, Niyazi Mısri, Erzurumlu İbrahim Hakkı, Nâmık Kemal, Hoca Tahsin, Tevfik Fikret; (Persian) Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi, Sa'di Shirazi, Hafiz Shirazi; (Arabic) 'Ali b. Abi Talib, 'Abd al-Qadir Gilani, Imam Busiri, Nabigha, 'Antara, Quss b. Sa'ida, Tubba, and so on.

Said Nursi mentioned certain poems by Hazrat 'Ali (May God be pleased with him) and 'Abd al-Qadir Gilani (May God be pleased with him) in so far as they

19. *Sözler*, 677.
20. *Sözler*, 213.

possess aspects which look to the Risale-i Nur, related to their letters and the science of *jafr*. It is striking that for the most part he considered sufi poets to be closest to him, as is to be seen from his quoting from the four great poets of Persian literature. Niyazi Mısri has a special place among these. In the Twenty-Sixth Flash, he quotes four couplets of the poem the last word of each couplet is "*bihaber*" (unaware), in an atmosphere which plucks the heartstrings of the readers:

Each day a stone from the building of my life falls to the ground;
Heedless one! You slumber —the building is in ruins— unaware!
While my heart desired its immortality, Reality required the passing of my body;
I am afflicted with an ill, of which even Luqman was unaware!
I had concluded no trade; the capital of life was lost;
I arrived at the road, but the caravan had moved on, unaware.
Lamenting, I continued down the road, all alone, a stranger;
My eyes weeping, my heart in anguish, my mind bewildered, unaware.[21]

Bediuzzaman recalls the succinct lines of İbrahim Hakkı, who wrote in response to the Mu'tazilites' claim that man creates his own actions, thus transgressing the bounds of man's will:

Let's see what the Master does;
Whatever He does, it is best![22]

On the one hand, Bediuzzaman encourages people to discover their inner worlds, and on the other he tries to establish social justice. In doing this, he gives a place in the Risale-i Nur to two couplets of Namık Kemal, and one of Tevfik Fikret:

One who assists oppressors is the world's most despicable being;
He is a dog, who receives pleasure from serving the unjust.[23]
It is not possible through tyranny and injustice to destroy freedom;
Try to remove consciousness, if you can, from human kind.[24]
If tyranny has cannon, shot, and forts,
Right has an untwistable arm, a constant face.[25]

He also wrote poems in the style of 'Abd al-Qadir Gilani,[26] Namık Kemal,[27] and Tevfik Fikret.[28]

21. *Lem'alar*, 209-10 / *The Flashes Collection*, 288-9.
22. *Mektûbat*, 246 / *Letters*, 267.
23. *Mektûbat*, 395 / *Letters*, 425.
24. *Lem'alar*, 160 / *The Flashes Collection*, 226.
25. *Mektûbat*, 76 / *Letters*, 96.
26. *Sözler*, 210 / *The Words*, 233.
27. *Lem'alar*, 160 / *The Flashes Collection*, 226.
28. *Mektûbat*, 76 / *Letters*, 96.

IV. Bediuzzaman's views on poetry

In the Risale-i Nur, Bediuzzaman gives importance to the principles of eloquence (or rhetoric), rather than to poetry. Of the three 'Makâle's' which make up the work *Muhâkemat*, one is called "Unsuru'l-Belâgat" (The Elements of Eloquence). Questions related to eloquence are presented in this chapter in twelve sections.

His approach here is is based on the Islamic attitude towards poetry, for in the Qur'an, it says: "*We have not instructed [the Prophet] in poetry, nor is it meet for him ... that Book is pure admonishment and a perspicuous Qur'an.*"[29] While in a Hadith, the criterion "There is wisdom in poetry" has been laid down.[30] Bediuzzaman utilized poetry as the Prophet (PBUH) had done, but did not give it priority. In conveying the message of Islam, he gave importance to content over form, and it is striking that he did not use the established poetic rhymes and metres, preferring the order which arises from the meanings. He emphasized this with the words: "The natural channel of ideas and emotions is the order of the meanings."[31]

Because in poetry imagination and reality are interwoven, Divine Determining did not open that door to Bediuzzaman, but planted him firmly in the valley of prose:

> "For sure poetry is a valuable and pleasant means of expression, but because imagination predominates in it, it confuses reality, and changes the form of the truths. Sometimes imagination and reality change places. Since I was destined for future service of the All-Wise Qur'an, which is pure truth and reality, as an instance of Divine grace, Divine Determining did not open the door of poetry to me. An inner meaning of the verse *We have not instructed [the Prophet] in poetry, nor is it meet for him* looks to this."[32]

A. Poetry

1. Poetry should not take the place of the Qur'an

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi says that the Divine Word cannot be compared with poetry and that the language of the Qur'an is superior to everything relative. Since its verses speak of the Divine acts and attributes, and poetry discusses other things, the Qur'an is exempt from the imaginary worlds of poetry.[33] Said Nursi recalls the verse *We have not instructed [the Prophet] in poetry, nor is it meet for him; this is no less than a message and a Qur'an making things clear*[34] in Sura Ya. Sin., and says:

> "... the mark of poetry is to adorn insignificant and dull facts with big and shining images and fancies, and make them attractive. Whereas the truths of the Qur'an

29. Qur'an, 36:69.
30. Canan, İbrahim, *Kütüb-ü Sitte Muhtasarı, Tercüme ve Şehri*, Ankara, Akçağ Yayınları 1989, viii, 182.
31. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Muhâkemat*, Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1991, 77.
32. *Barla Lahikası*, 178.
33. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, Istanbul, Envar Neşriyat 1984, 190-1.
34. Qur'an, 36:69.

are so great, elevated, shining and brilliant that compared to them even the greatest and most brilliant imaginings appear to be dull and insignificant."[35]

Another reason the Qur'an is not in verse is that its verses could not be contained within the poetic forms:

"Another reason the Qur'an of Miraculous Exposition is not in verse, despite the perfection of its word-order and orderedness and its expounding with its well-ordered styles the order and art of the book of the universe, is that by not entering under the restrictions of metre, each star of its verses can be a sort of centre to the most of the other verses, and be a brother to them, and each can form a connecting line with the verses within the sphere encompassing it in order to be a bond in the relationships which exist between them. It is as if each independent verse has an eye which looks to most of the other verses, and a face turned towards them."[36]

The Qur'an's eloquence is superior to all human eloquence, and it defeated the 7th century masters of Arab literature:

"From that age till now the Qur'an has demonstrated such eloquence that it caused Labid's daughter to remove from the walls of the Ka'ba the famous verses written in gold of the most celebrated poets called 'the Seven Hanging Poems,' and to declare while doing so: 'Beside the verses of the Qur'an these no longer have any value!'

"Also, when a bedouin poet heard the verse, *Therefore expound openly what you are commanded*[37] being recited, he bowed down in prostration. When asked if he had become a Muslim, he replied: 'No, I was prostrating before the eloquence of this verse.'

"Also, thousands of brilliant scholars and learned literary figures like the geniuses of the science of rhetoric, 'Abd al-Qahir Jurjani, Sakkaki, and Zamakhshari all reached the conclusion that, 'The Qur'an's eloquence is beyond man's power, he could not achieve it.'"[38]

2. The nature of poetry is to be a mirror to the external world, and to resemble nature and imitate it

Said Nursi said that the function of poetry is to "represent the laws and measures of the outside world."[39] To do this is also the source of life of eloquence and the philosophy of rhetoric. He considers that the poet should read the book of the universe like a student and reflect the laws of creation:[40]

"Through comparison and allegory, and by way of circulation, and the disposal of fancy, it is to establish in spiritual matters and conduct, which are poetical, the laws of the outer realities. That is to say, like a mirror, it represents the rays of reality which are reflected from outside. It is as though with its imaginary art and verbal embellishments, it imitates and relates creation and nature."[41]

35. *Sözler*, 127 / *The Words*, 151.
36. *Sözler*, 127 / *The Words*, 151.
37. Qur'an, 15:94.
38. *Sözler*, 411 / *The Words*, 460.
39. *Muhâkemat*, 91.
40. *Muhâkemat*, 96.
41. *Muhâkemat*, 91.

Aristotle was of the opinion that in general the art of poetry was tied to two fundamental aspects of human nature: "the compulsion to imitate," and "the pleasure" received from all the products of imitation.[42]

3. Poetry should reflect "sheer beauty"

Sheer beauty (*hüsn-i mücerred*) are beauties like existence, life, and belief, which are not lost when their conditions disappear, but of themselves are beautiful and whose beauty is not dependent on other things. Beauty which becomes apparent through the measured combination of materials is not sheer beauty. Sheer beauty has no physical existence. Bediuzzaman says:

"Sheer beauty, the source of all beauty, is contained in perfect order. It is the garden of the flowers of eloquence known as subtle virtues and qualities."[43]

Sheer beauty gives shape and form to the allusions overlying the true meanings of poetry, and emerges from the equilibrium of the meanings intended by the Shari'a: "The true meaning should have a stamp. What defines the stamp is the sheer beauty born of the balance between the aims of the Shari'a."[44]

Said Nursi's view of sheer beauty opens up the horizons of pure poetry.

4. Imagination in poetry should be bound to reality

Said Nursi's views on this subject are within the perspective of the last four verses of Sura al-Shu'ara: *And the poets —it is those straying in evil, who follow; * See you not that they wander distractedly in every valley? * And that they say what they practise not?— * Except those who believe, work righteousness, engage much in the remembrance of God. And defend themselves only after they are unjustly attacked. And soon will the unjust assailants know what vicissitudes their affairs will take.*[45]

Since it is not generally possible to restrain the power of imagination, it leads to false interpretations of things and events, and to deviation from the truth:

"For sure poetry is a valuable and pleasant means of expression, but because imagination predominates in it, it confuses reality, and changes the form of the truths. Sometimes imagination and reality change places. Since I was destined for future service of the All-Wise Qur'an, which is pure truth and reality, as an instance of Divine grace, Divine Determining did not open the door of poetry to me. An inner meaning of the verse *We have not instructed [the Prophet] in poetry, nor is it meet for him* looks to this."[46]

Possessing this dangerous quality, poetry can be held in balance only by not severing the relations between imagination and reality. Bediuzzaman illustrates this with the allegory of a seed and a tree: "It is essential that a grain of truth is found in every imagining."[47]

42. Aristoteles, *Poetika* [Trans: İsmail Tunalı], Istanbul, Remzi Yayınevi 1987, 16.
43. *Muhâkemat*, 77-8.
44. *Muhâkemat*, 23.
45. Qur'an, 26:224-7.
46. *Barla Lahikası*, 178.
47. *Muhâkemat*, 81.

5. What is basic to poetry is not rhyme and metre, but inner harmony

Said Nursi considered the inner face of things and events rather than their externals, and directed attention from the periphery to the centre. At the beginning of his work *Lemeât*, he makes some very interesting observations. He describes those who forget the contents and pursue rhyme and metre as "sacrificing lucidness to rhyme" and "chipping away and filing the body to suit the clothes."

> "In accordance the rule 'A man is hostile to what he does not know,' I have attached no importance to the rules of versification and rhyme, since I do not know them. I at no time wanted to change the form of reality in accordance with the wishes of versification as though sacrificing lucidness to rhyme. I have clothed the most exalted truths in a rumpled dress in this unversified, unrhymed piece. Firstly, I did not know any better and was only thinking of the meaning. Secondly, I wanted to demonstrate my criticism of those poets who chip away and file the body to suit the clothes. ... A hat may be without a tassel, and metre may be without rhyme, and verse without rules. I think that if the words and versification attract the attention through their art, they busy it with themselves. It is better to be at odds and ends in order not to distract attention from the meaning."[48]

These lines show that free verse is his aim, and advise that form should not be more attractive than content. Attention should rather be drawn to inner harmony: "It is the order of the meanings which afford a spiritual harmony to the songs of the nightingales."[49]

B. The poet

The poet is a nightingale captivated by the flowers in the gardens of creation. His songs are the garden of the flowers of eloquence, that is, "sheer beauty."

"As for sheer beauty, it is the garden of the flowers of eloquence known as subtle points and qualities. The flowers' garden are the songs of the nightingales called poets, which are manifested in the gardens of creation and worship the blooms."[50]

V. Conclusion

The poetic style of the Risale-i Nur should be benefited from in the teaching of Art, Aesthetics, and Turkish Language and Literature.

Bediuzzaman was a master of prose in an electric style. In conformity with the Qur'anic method, he wrote in prose. That is, he chose prose rather than poetry. To put it another way, he combined prose and poetry. Poetry itself may be seen in this light. Differently to the tradition of metre in Turkish poetry, a line of development which begins with '*müstezad*' and stretches to free verse, and makes its existence ever more strongly felt, is parallel to the Qur'anic style and the points which the Risale-i Nur makes. Said Nursi's approach should be borne in mind in the face of the view that poetry is fantasy or a superficial means of

48. *Sözler*, 634-5.
49. *Muhâkemat*, 77-8.
50. *Muhâkemat*, 77-8.

gratification, for it recommends avoiding extremes in either direction, and places importance on the sequence of the meanings.

Although Bediuzzaman was not a poet, he gave it a place in life and considered the part together with the whole. In his anthropocentric view of this world and the hereafter, the axis of belief and sincerity formed the spiritual dynamic of society. He always looked at the world of poetry from this angle.

* * *

KALAM (THEOLOGY), *IJTIHAD*

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: The *Kalam* Scholar of the Modern Age

Muhsin 'Abd al-Hamid

At the end of the 19th century, all the tyrannical and destructive forces in the world united in planning to extinguish the light of Islam, distance its members from it, and to tear down the Islamic state that for five centuries had guarded the honour of Islam. Moreover, apostates appeared from within it, and seizing the opportunity, showed their true faces. They speedily spread their propaganda, deceiving people, and doing their utmost to have the Islamic lands occupied by enemy forces. The international Jewish leaders and Mason lodges were directing this, while the crusader-minded states gave powerful support to bring down the Islamic state, have its honour trampled underfoot, blood split, its values, balances, and laws changed, to cause corruption worldwide, establish what is unlawful, spread denial and atheism, to expel Muslims from the civilization of belief and learning, and have it changed into the civilization of disbelief and rebellion.

However, these fearsome threats stirred into action the bewildered and defeated masses with their dessicated bodies and petrified minds. Overwhelming need was felt for reformists, resolute voices, the ideas of the religious scholars,

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and the blood of martyrs. Every blow received further exalted the phrase "There is no god but God, Muhammad is the Messenger of God."

Throughout the centuries the Muslims of Turkey shared in this struggle and jihad by fighting mighty battles in the way of Islam, defending with the blood of pious martyrs the Muslim Umma and the holy places like Mecca and Medina and the *Masjid al-Aqsa* against the powerful crusader armies. So too it fell to them to once again raise up the Umma's honour. A second tragedy, like that of Andalusia, was thus prevented for the Muslim Arabs of the East. With these open breaches being stopped up, the oceans before them were obstructed and the advancing armies halted, and the fearsome vacuum filled.

The Sustainer of the all the worlds wished that this Muslim Umma, the last bearers of the heavenly message to all the universe, should not perish. So from it He sent loyal friends of His, learned men who acted in accordance with their knowledge, interpreters of the law who scattered light, and sincere regenerators of religion. They all demonstrated the miracle of Islam so that they might save the Umma from its civilizational decline, and through its beliefs, which are in accordance with human nature, and through the wisdom of the Shari'a and its high morality, they might return the Umma to the compassionate embrace of Islam and its dominical civilization.

Thus, Almighty God gave success to the great Ustad, the glorious leader, and steadfast caller to Islam, Bediuzzaman, in carrying out numerous good works in this noble Islamic land.

In the field of Islamic politics he proceeded with the greatest caution, acted intelligently, and chose a peaceful stance. Conforming to the contemporary conditions, he sought in its deepest roots the cures for the Umma's sicknesses, founded the external matters of social life on firm principles, and instead of campaigning with empty propaganda, he took problems to the platform of profound thought. Thus he purified minds, cured opinions, identified the enemies, and prepared the Umma to re-form, when it had begun to be split up.

Bediuzzaman chose this way out of his powerful belief, confident certainty, dignity, firm character and great courage. However much he possessed the ability to direct bloody wars and oppose with violence the rulers of the day, he knew that such a course of action would not be in the interests of the Islamic Umma. He understood perfectly that what the Umma needed was not martyrs that go victim to internal dissension, but loyal scholars, leaders who act in accordance with their knowledge, and rulers who think deeply over matters. This was essential for the saving of belief, the prevention of the defections from religion caused by 'civilization,' ignorance, and the eradication of the deceptions of Christians, the conspiracies of Jews, and the treachery of dissemblers.

Bediuzzaman was of the opinion that *'ilm al-kalām* (theology) at that time did not have the capacity to direct the struggles of the modern age in the field of the tenets of belief. It had fulfilled its purpose since it was preoccupied with terminology and arguments about theological theory, and functioned according to the knowledge of a former age.

The method of the Mu'tazilite scholars was considered inadequate, for they had embarked on a struggle to distance the concept of the Divine attributes from the Christian belief in the Trinity, and had tried to protect Muslims from imaginary association of partners with God and from the Rawaqis of the past re-emerging.

Similarly, the method of preserving the chief texts in the face of the Mu'tazilites by not comparing the writings of Islam and the writings about theological disputes and terminology, no longer had any meaning.

So too, in the new areas of striving today, there was little relevance in the method of the Ash'aris and their attempts to bring the two groups closer to together and find a middle way in questions in the old science of *kalām* related to reconciling 'reason' and 'revelation,' for that *kalām* had been an ideology acceptable by the Muslims and societies of that time.

Finally, the ascetic sufis, who were engrossed in their spiritual journeying and were not concerned with current affairs, could they have halted the acceptance of the moral principles of a materialist civilization which in all its aspects reflected ignorance? How could they have directed any movement against that storm of ignorance that was shaking the world, and its destructive principles that were destroying everything?

In the shadow of this backwardness and decline of civilization and the weakness of the Muslim's belief, Islam and the Muslims of today were awaiting a scholar of *kalām* with a highly developed, fine understanding and awareness of civilization, someone whose perception, moulded by belief, was of sufficient depth to understand all the Islamic sciences, and the struggle between the system of Islamic civilization and that of Western civilization.

Divine will dictated that Bediuzzaman Said Nursi should appear at this time, as a scholar of *kalām* possessing all the necessary attributes. As follows:

The First: Bediuzzaman laid open to its full extent the ideological assault on Islamic beliefs, on its majesty and the elevatedness of its Shari'a, and the moral order that penetrated to the very the souls of Muslims. And he pointed out how this was being waged on numerous fronts, from the offices of the Westerners to the press, publications, culture, and educational organs which the atheists, dissemblers, Masons, and their neophytes directed in their attempts to spread modern materialistic ideas.

Secondly: He attempted to set forth a science of *kalām* based on the Qur'an, and on all evidences from the abstract to the concrete, and he accomplished this through the consciousness and experience of the perfect conformity between the Qur'an which is read, the Qur'an which is observed, and the third Qur'an, the model person of God's Messenger (PBUH), with the appearance of whom the universe reached perfect fulfilment, and who is considered to be its most valuable fruit.

Bediuzzaman did not suffice with the subjects of the old science of *kalām*; he went beyond it and set out a comprehensive method for proving the (Divine) existence. In doing this he gave a place to man and nature. In setting out these

questions from the point of view of materialist philosophy, he developed a system of *kalām* completely opposed to the Western ideological systems.

Thirdly: Bediuzzaman saw that in the struggle between the weak and defeated Islamic Umma and its powerful, arrogant enemies, the Muslims had insufficient forces. For the enemies employed a truly fearsome method of structural 'cleaning up' against everything preventing the Umma changing its identity and conforming to the order of an infidel society, such as flaying its skin, and making it adopt a culture so that no tie, religious, historical, civilizational, or philological, remained with its past.

The Fourth: He decided to create a comprehensive method which would enable all Muslims to withstand this mighty assault on a single front. For he believed that there were only two fronts in the universe: the front of belief and the Most Merciful, and the front of disbelief and Satan, which opposes it.

The Fifth: Bediuzzaman did not believe in partial knowledge, considering it to be the result of a defective human reason. We may say that if a Muslim scholar acquires knowledge of one science or very limited learning, or becomes absorbed in only one of the Divine mysteries, doubtless he will unable to attain a comprehensive knowledge or grasp the laws which bind the universe.

Thus, Bediuzzaman explained that with its premises, and its conclusions in the inner and outer worlds, understanding of the Qur'an had led to a perfect balance in the thought of Muslim scholars and men of knowledge. For the Qur'an's way is the most direct way to man's inborn nature, and stirs into action his mind, which seeks the truth, and his heart, which constantly struggles to retain life.

Thus, Bediuzzaman's method in his matchless work, the Risale-i Nur, was preserved from the intellectual skids encountered in the discussions of others about the Qur'anic injunctions and the changing necessities of life; it was preserved too from defective human understanding, and from deviating from the guidance of the Qur'an and Sunna. We may mention here his superior ability to pass to the furthest meanings when discussing the levels of existence in the most extensive sphere within the bounds of human power.

The Sixth: Bediuzzaman distinguished sharply between Divine revelation and the Islamic historical movement. In this respect he was a regenerator of religion in the true meaning. He strove to revivify the Umma at this time and place, in the struggle of civilizations of the present. But he did this under the direction of the Holy Qur'an and its Divine instruction, under the leadership of God's Messenger (PBUH), and in the light of the elevated, fine values which gave form to the works of the *mujahid* scholars.

Bediuzzaman called on people neither to turn back, nor to get caught up on the present. He believed in the necessity of the Muslim Umma being in perpetual motion and Islamic thought being renewed every century. It was his view that the Umma should remain aloof from the materialist thought which is tied to centres of power directed by various Jews, Christians, and the atheists of the modern age, and that it should rise to the level of civilization mankind has now reached.

The Seventh: Bediuzzaman accepted the philosophy which is based on truth

and belief, but he rejected the philosophy which, founded on futility, denies the God and Orderer of the cosmos and rejects the principles of the True Religion. He considered this latter philosophy to be a means of deviating into misguidance and atheism, and falling into the putrid hellish morass of lifeless nature. Philosophy in this form takes force as its point of support in society; its aim in all things is self-interest; its principle in life is conflict; it encourages racialism in the relations between different societies. And as Bediuzzaman said, the mark of force is enmity; the mark of self-interest, fighting over benefits; the mark of conflict, dispute and strife; and the mark of racialism, hostility.

However, if the term is permissible, Qur'anic philosophy takes truth instead of force, God's pleasure instead of self-interest, co-operation and mutual assistance in life instead of conflict, and bonds of humanity and religion instead of racialism.

Bediuzzaman did not only reject materialist philosophy, he also rejected the way of philosophy, also known as ancient divine philosophy, which was founded by Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, and was also influenced by Greek philosophy, and students of which, like Farabi and Ibn Sina, could not attain even the lowest degree of belief, since they did not accept the Qur'an as their master.

The Eighth: Bediuzzaman also rejected the cultural bases of Western civilization. For it inclines towards materialism. But on the other hand, he did not oppose the scientific front of this civilization. His standpoint here was to urge Muslims to discover the laws of life, and to profit from them in order to establish civilization and achieve progress. Such a course of action is necessary in order to build powerful societies. That is to say, in addition to believing that Islamic societies should preserve their own beliefs, nobility, and essential values, Bediuzzaman thought that they were in need of modern technology.

The Ninth: Although it is not the last, finally, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi believed not in anarchy in social change, but in order. He believed in gradual change, and rejected precipitateness or hastiness. For to be precipitate is to oppose the order of the universe, which is based on gradual change.

In place of precipitateness, therefore, which causes upheavals in the life of society, makes evil prevail everywhere, and causes grievous destruction, Bediuzzaman foresaw social change tied to the law of natural change, which starts at the bottom and continues to the top.

Bediuzzaman believed that change would be realized through social awareness, a sound cause, and peaceful action. He certainly did not look favourably on armed jihad within Islamic society against the state and its institutions. For in his view, this would be advantageous only to external enemies, who were lying in wait for such an inopportune time for the Islamic society.

Nevertheless, he did not deny that the club might be used in the final stages of the construction of an Islamic society, by powerful, believing rulers. For in such a situation, in regard to interpretations of the Imam Martyr (May God be pleased

with him) and of Bediuzzaman, it would mean that advice and guidance were without benefit.

This then is the great scholar, educator, and renewer of the science of *kalām*, the man of action I have been able to discover from his matchless, brilliant Words (the Risale-i Nur), which always urge the totality of the Islamic and human structure forward, Ustad Bediuzzaman. He is the leader from whom grace and blessings poured forth, like the abundance of the spring, which he loved and every year embraced with his whole soul and being; and who like a commander, ordered to advance in divisions the matchless words in his brilliant, light-scattering, Qur'anic treatises, which he wrote in order to save the faith of believers. For they were afflicted with heedlessness, and plans had been set against them by their enemies with the aim of stealing their belief, alienating them from their culture, changing their way of life, and preventing their voice ever again rising strongly.

We may therefore say that Bediuzzaman's method of renewal in the field of *kalām*, which aimed to change it, was not directed at any specific problem or specific time. This comprehensive method rather constitutes a firm basis in conformity with the language and life-style of the age and with the struggles that take place in this age of ignorance, and with the behavioural norms of the Umma.

The knowledge of the *kalām* scholars of the past consisted of what was written in books. Bediuzzaman, however, started from the books, then surpassing them, reached out to the universe, the Qur'an, and God's Messenger (PBUH), and moving on from here to social action based on belief, he strove to reform those people who had been corrupted.

And this is the great difference between abstract knowledge and applied knowledge, and restricted knowledge and absolute knowledge.

May Almighty God bestow His mercy on Bediuzzaman in the most abundant fashion, and reward him in the best way. May He resurrect him together with the prophets and messengers, the martyrs and the righteous. And they are the best of companions.

As-salāmu alaykum wa raḥmatullāhi wa barakātuhu.

* * *

Bediuzzaman's Views on *Ijtihad*

Mustafa Baktır

I. Definition of *Ijtihad* and Conditions of Being a *Mujtahid*

A. What is *Ijtihad?*

The word *ijtihād* is derived from the root *jahd*, meaning exerting oneself to obtain something. In this context, it is a *mujtahid* exerting himself to the utmost in order to make a ruling of the Shari'a from specific evidences. If we analyze this definition, the following elements emerge:

(1) One who exerts himself to understand a ruling of the Shari'a being a *mujtahid.*

(2) A *mujtahid* exerting himself to grasp the matter thoroughly.

(3) This exertion should be in order to understand the injunctions of the Shari'a and those pertaining to actions.

(4) *Ijtihad* being carried out according to particular principles and by deduction from specific evidences.

It is therefore not *ijtihad* to learn a question from books or by asking scholars.

The *mujtahid* is someone who has the ability to carry out *ijtihad*, and fulfils all the necessary conditions. The conditions are as follows:

B. The conditions for being a *Mujtahid*

1) Knowledge of Arabic: Before everything the *mujtahid* has to have a thorough knowledge of the styles, eloquence, and subtleties of the Arabic language. For the two chief sources of Islam, the Qur'an and Sunna, are in Arabic.

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2) Knowledge of the Qur'an: The Qur'an being the main source of religion, he should know it all generally, and have more detailed knowledge of the verses related to the injunctions (*aḥkām*) of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and he should be acquainted with all their finer points.

3) Knowledge of Hadiths: Since the Hadiths of God's Messenger (PBUH) are the second main source of Islamic law, they are part of the *mujtahid's* area of interest. He should know not only the content of the Hadiths, but the degrees of their soundness.

4) Knowledge of the injunctions about which there is consensus (ijmā'): The *mujtahid* should know the questions about which the scholars of *fiqh* have reached consensus and should be extremely careful not to pass any judgements opposed to them. For it is not permissible to carry out *ijtihad* on any question about which there is consensus.

5) Knowledge of the principles of fiqh: In order to carry out *ijtihad* on a question, he should know the evidences of the Shari'a and their order of precedence. He can know the meaning of the words and their order of precedence only through knowledge of this science.

6) Knowledge of the aims of the Shari'a: Shatibi (d. 790/1388) in particular emphasized the importance of this condition, which means understanding the aims and purposes of the Shari'a. This is the first and most important of the two conditions that have to be fulfilled by the *mujtahid*.[1]

7) The ability to carry out ijtihad: The *mujtahid* has to possess the accurate perception, innate capacity and mental clarity necessary to make precise and swift decisions. If he lacks the capacity, he cannot be a *mujtahid* even if he fulfils the other conditions.

8) Good intention and sound belief: Imam Ghazzali (d. 505/1111) stated that for the *fatwa* (ruling) of a *mujtahid* to be acceptable, he had firstly to be just, of good character, and righteous. A ruling given by a person lacking those qualities is not acceptable.[2] Bediuzzaman laid down the condition for those who carry out *ijtihad* of their having "perfect *taqwa*" and the intention "to conform to the essentials of religion."[3]

II. Is the Door of *Ijtihad* Open or Closed?

One of the questions debated most in connection with *ijtihad* is whether or not any century can be without a *mujtahid*. It is expressed as "*Khulūw al-aṣr min al-mujtahidīn*," and sometimes discussed in terms of whether or not the gate of *ijtihad* is open. Although some scholars of *fiqh* have asserted that since the fourth century of the Hijra the gate of *ijtihad* has been closed, there have been others who have stated that it will be open till the Last Day. I want firstly to give the different views of the scholars, and then describe the points Bediuzzaman makes and his analyses.

1. Shaṭibī, Ibrāhīm b. Mūsa, *al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharī'a*, Egypt, iv, 105-6.
2. Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad, *al-Mustaṣfā fī 'Ilm al-Uṣūl*, Egypt 1324, ii, 350.
3. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Sözler*, Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1960, 451 / *The Words* [English trans.], Sözler Publications 1993, 496.

A. Those who say that no century can be without its *mujtahid*

According to one group of scholars, it is not possible for any century or age to be without a *mujtahid*. Imam Suyuti (d. 911/1505) held this view, and wrote an independent work as a refutation of those who opposed it.[4] The following Hadith forms the proof for those supporting this view:

> "One group of my Umma will persist in the truth. Those who oppose them will be unable to harm them. Finally God's command will be given while they are in that state."[5]

B. Those who say that some centuries may be without *mujtahids*

According to another group of *fiqh* scholars, it is permissible for any century to be without a *mujtahid*, as actually happened. Although Shawkani (d. 1250/1832) said that Imam Ghazzali and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 606/1209) were of this view,[6] I could find nothing to confirm it their books. We see that the Shafi'i Sayfuddin al-'Amidi (d. 631/1233), the Hanifis Ibn al-Humam (d. 861/1457), Ibn Amir al-Hajj (d. 879/1475) and other *fiqh* scholars held this view too.[7] Their evidence for this is the following Hadith, related by 'Abdullah b. 'Amr:

> "Once Almighty God has bestowed knowledge on you, He will not forcibly take it from you. But He will take the scholars from within society together with their knowledge. Then matters will remain to an ignorant group. The people will ask them concerning their religious needs, and replying in accordance with their personal opinions and wishes, they will lead the people astray, and they too will be in misguidance."[8]

The reason for this view was the anarchy in the issuing of rulings and carrying out of *ijtihad* from the third century onwards, and was given as the explanation for the ruling that the door of *ijtihad* had been closed.[9]

C. Shatibi's view

The interpretation of Shatibi, who introduced new methods in the science of the principles of *fiqh*, differed to the above. In his view, *ijtihad* was of two sorts:

The First was the *ijtihad* which will continue till the Last Day. It is not possible for this *ijtihad* to cease before that happens. *Ijtihad* of this sort consists of defining whether or not a primary matter or reason (*'illa*) is present exactly in secondary matters, and is known as *taḥqīq al-manāṭ*. For example, in the Qur'an,

4. Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān, *Kitāb al-Radd 'alā Man Akhlada Ilā'l-Radd*, Beirut 1983, 97; Shawkānī, Muḥammad b. 'Alī, *Irshād al-Fuḥūl*, Beirut, 222; Ibn Badrān, 'Abd al-Qādir b. Aḥmad, *al-Madkhal*, Dār Iḥya'u'l-Turāth al-'Arabī, 191; al-Zuḥaylī, Wahbī, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, Damascus 1986, ii, 1070; Karaman, Hayreddin, *İslâm Hukukunda İctihad*, Ankara 1975, 183.
5. *Bukhārī*, Tawḥīd, 29, viii, 189; al-I'tiṣām, 10, viii, 149; *Muslim*, al-Imāra, 170, No: 1920; *Tirmidhī*, Fitan, 51; *Ibn Māja*, Muqaddima, 1.
6. Shawkānī, *Irshād al-Fuḥūl*, 223.
7. al-Āmidī, Sayf al-Dīn 'Alī b. Abī 'Alī, *al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, Cairo 1968, iv, 202-3; Ibn al-Humām, Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad, *al-Taḥrīr fī'l-Uṣūl* (tog. with *al-Taqrīr wa'l-Taḥbīr*), Beirut 1983, iii, 336; al-Anṣārī, Muḥammad b. Niẓām al-Dīn, *Fawātiḥ al-Raḥamūt*, Egypt 1324, 399.
8. *Bukhārī*, al-'Ilm, 34; al-I'tiṣām, 7, viii, 148; *Muslim*, al-'Ilm, 13, No: 2673; *Tirmidhī*, al-'Ilm, 5; *Ibn Māja*, Muqaddima, 8; *Dārimī*, Muqaddima, 26.
9. Sha'ban, Zekiyüddin, *İslâm Hukuk İlminin Esasları* [Turk. trans: İ. Kafi Dönmez], Ankara 1990, 378.

Almighty God says: "*And take for witness two persons from among you, endued with justice...*"[10] There is need to establish who possesses the attribute of 'justice,' the limits of which are specified by the Shari'a. This attribute starts with Abu Bakr and continues to people of much lower degree. One has to expend all one's power to establish whether or not it is found in someone. It is natural that all judges, Muftis, and anyone authorized even, can perform *ijtihad* of this sort. For someone authorized, even if they are illiterate, may decide whether or not any unstipulated action made mistakenly while performing the obligatory prayers has invalidated the prayers, or whether or not it is excusable.[11]

The Second: To come to the *ijtihad* that may cease to be practised in time; it is of three sorts:

a) Tanqīḥ al-manāṭ: This is the differentiation from other attributes by means of *ijtihad* of an attribute which is basic to the making of a ruling. In some Qur'anic verses and Hadiths, the attribute which is possibly the primary matter or reason is mentioned jointly with others. The primary matter has to be differentiated by means of *ijtihad* from those that have been abrogated.

b) Takhrīj al-manāṭ: Here, there is no indication or explanation concerning the primary matter or reason in the verses or Hadiths which define the ruling. The primary matter or reason has to be established in various ways through *ijtihad.*

c) A second sort of the *taḥqīq al-manāṭ* mentioned above, which is a more subtle and profound matter. This too may cease.[12]

D. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's view

Bediuzzaman's view and evaluation of this question is somewhat different. He maintains that the door of *ijtihad* is open, but at the present time there are a number of obstacles preventing it being entered.

1. *The increase of innovations in the Islamic world:* According to Bediuzzaman, on a stormy day in winter one blocks up small holes, let alone opening up new doors. To try to open up holes in a wall in order to repair it while it is threatened by the full force of a flood, is likely to cause it to be washed away. Bediuzzaman continues:

> "In just the same way, at this time of denial and the assault of the customs of Europe and the legion of innovations and the destruction of misguidance, to open up new doors in the citadel of Islam in the name of *ijtihad*, and make openings that will be the means of those bent on destruction scaling the walls and entering it, is a crime against Islam."[13]

2. *The essentials of religion being in danger:* According to Bediuzzaman, at the present time, the fundamentals of religion are in danger. In any event, there is no need for *ijtihad* in these basic matters. Religion cannot exist without them. The essentials of religion should therefore be firstly established and revived.

10. Qur'an, 65:2.
11. Shāṭibī, *al-Muwāfaqāt*, iv, 89-93.
12. Ibid., 95 ff.
13. *Sözler*, 449 / *The Words*, 495.

Moreover, the *ijtihads* carried out by early scholars can meet our needs in many matters. Bediuzzaman says that to leave them aside and carry out new *ijtihad* is therefore "an innovation and a betrayal of Islam."[14]

3. *The environmental factor in raising mujtahids:* On looking at human history, we see that every century some things have been sought after and that people have expended all their strength to obtain them. According to Bediuzzaman, in the age of the righteous first generations of Islam, the thing most sought after was as follows:

> "... Deducing from the Word of the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth His wishes and what He wants of us were the most sought-after goods, and obtaining the means to gain through the light of prophethood and the Qur'an, eternal happiness in the world of the hereafter, which had been revealed to such a degree it could not be concealed."[15]

Bediuzzaman described as follows the environmental factor in raising *mujtahids* in the times near the era of the Prophet (PBUH):

> "At that time, since minds, hearts and spirits were turned with all their strength to understanding the wishes of the Sustainer of the Heavens and the Earth, the discussions, conversations, events, and circumstances of man's social life all looked to that. Since they occurred in accordance with those wishes, whoever had high ability, his heart and nature unconsciously received instruction in knowledge of God from everything. He received knowledge from the circumstances, events, and discussions that took place at that time. As though everything became a teacher for such a person, and inculcated in his nature and disposition the preparatory knowledge for independent judgements. That natural instruction illuminated him to such a degree that he was almost capable of interpreting the law without acquiring the knowledge, to be illuminated without fire... Thus, when someone capable who received such natural instruction in this way began to work at interpreting the law, his capacity which had become like a match manifested the mystery of *Light upon Light*; he became qualified to interpret it (*mujtahid*) swiftly and in a brief time."[16]

However, due to the awesome moral and spiritual pollution of the present day, it does not appear possible to find an environment conducive to raising *mujtahids*. Bediuzzaman gives three main reasons for this: a) the domination of European civilization over Muslims; b) the supremacy of naturalist philosophy; and c) the conditions of life becoming more difficult. Because of these, people's minds have become scattered, their endeavour stifled and solidarity broken, and their minds have become alienated from spiritual matters. The people of the present, who have grown up in such an environment, are in need of ten times longer to reach the level of the *mujtahids* of the early period.[17]

4. *Ijtihad should not be forced, but within the natural course of things:* There is an inclination to grow and expand in all bodies. Since it is natural, it moves towards perfection, like the growth and development of a tree and its starting to

14. *Sözler*, 450 / *The Words*, 496.
15. *Sözler*, 450 / *The Words*, 496.
16. *Sözler*, 450 / *The Words*, 496.
17. *Sözler*, 450 / *The Words*, 496.

produce fruit. However, if this expansion is from without, it leads to the body's destruction and annihilation. Bediuzzaman applies the same comparison to *ijtihad*:

> "... when the inclination to expand and will to interpret the law were present in those within the sphere of Islam through the door of perfect *taqwa* and the way of conforming to the essential teachings of Islam, like the righteous early generations, that was a perfection and a being perfected. But if such an inclination and desire come from those who give up the essentials, prefer the life of this world to that of the hereafter, and are tainted by materialist philosophy, it is the means of destroying the body of Islam and casting off the chain of the Shari'a from the neck."[18]

5. *Distance from the Age of Bliss:* The great *mujtahids*, who belonged to the early generations of Islam, were close in time to the Companions of the Prophet, and receiving a pure light, were able to carry out *ijtihad*. But those of the present are distant from that age, and can therefore see even the clearest matters only with difficulty.[19]

Bediuzzaman discussed these ideas in specific sections in the Twenty-Seventh Word, which he called *İjtihad Risalesi* (Treatise on Independent Judgements of the Law [*Ijtihad*]). We may list as follows the chief obstacles to *ijtihad*, taken from both the above treatise and other parts of the Risale-i Nur:

6. The domination of European civilization and atheistic Western philosophy over Muslims.

7. Increased difficulties in making a livelihood.

8. The fact that at the present time the questions of *fiqh* are considered from the point of view of wisdom and benefit, not that of the reason (*'illa*). Although the wisdom is taken into account, the ruling should not be based on it, but on the reason.

9. The life of this world is now the centre of everyone's attention, while the life of the hereafter remains in second place.

10. Misunderstanding of the principle of 'necessity,' which is a means of facilitating things.[20]

III. The Practice of *Ijtihad* in the Form of Consultation

Bediuzzaman suffered greatly at the plight of the Islamic world during the period of the Ottoman collapse, and from time to time set out his ideas in the press, and produced solutions for its problems. In his view, the Shaykh al-Islam's Office, which represented the Caliphate in Istanbul, should be an institution not only for Istanbul and the Ottomans, but for the whole Islamic world. In its ineffectual state at that time, it was incapable of guiding Istanbul, let alone the vast world of Islam. It should be made such that it could gain the confidence of the Islamic world and perform its function towards them satisfactorily.[21]

18. *Sözler*, 451 / *The Words*, 497.
19. *Sözler*, 452-3 / *The Words*, 499.
20. *Sözler*, 450-1 / *The Words*, 496-7.
21. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Sünûhat*, Istanbul 1977, 37-8. (This work was first published in Istanbul in 1338/1922).

Bediuzzaman indicates that with the changing times, rulings may change, and the reason *ijtihad* should be in the form of consultation:

> "We are not in the old times now. Formerly, a single individual ruled, and the ruler's *mufti* could also be a single individual who corrected and modified his ideas. The present, however, is the time of the social collectivity. And the ruler is an unemotional, stern collective personality, which is somewhat deaf and emerges from the spirit of the collectivity."

Bediuzzaman says that the Mufti has need of such a council in order to make what he says accepted by the people. For an individual is merely like a mosquito before the collective personality of a community. He attributes to "the weakness and ineffectiveness of the Shaykh al-Islam's Office" the "weakness of religion, indifference towards the marks of Islam, and anarchy in *ijtihad*" that was then afflicting society. Then the pronouncements of the Shaykh al-Islam proceeding from such a council could make even the greatest genius give up his *ijtihad*, and a consensus could be obtained in many matters.

All those qualified can interpret the law (*ijtihad*), but such *ijtihad* becomes a guiding principle only when confirmed by consensus or is accepted by the majority of the *'ulama*. A Shaykh al-Islam whose rulings (*fatwa*) emerge from such a council, would reflect the meaning of this. In Islamic law, actions should primarily be in accordance with the view of the majority. At the present time, in the face of the anarchy of opinions, there is overwhelming need for such measures. The council could be set up either in Istanbul, the centre of the Caliphate, or somewhere else if necessary.

Bediuzzaman says that although a number of infrastructural preparations should first be made, like "the organization of the Islamic community" and "the taking over of the pious foundations (*evkaf*) by the Shaykh al-Islam's Office," these may also done afterwards. He says too that the matter may be performed indirectly by the deputies [of the National Assembly], but it would be only indirectly. "But a purely Islamic council is necessary to undertake this vast duty directly and primarily."[22] It should not be forgotten here that there were also non-Muslim deputies in the Assembly. Bediuzzaman says too:

> "... the Darü'l-Hikmeti'l-İslâmiye, which was founded for an important purpose, should be raised from the level of an ordinary commission. It should be deemed the natural member of the council together with the chiefs of the departments of the Shaykh al-Islam's Office, and for now fifteen or twenty eminent scholars who have won the confidence of Islam, both religiously and morally, should be attracted from the Islamic world abroad. This forms the basis of this weighty question."[23]

On 16th April, 1916, Bediuzzaman was writing a Qur'anic commentary in Arabic entitled *Ishārāt al-I'jāz* (Signs of Miraculousness), while fighting against the Russians in the mountains of Pasinler near Erzurum during the First World War. In the introduction to the work, he emphasizes that a successful Qur'anic

22. *Sünûhat*, 38-9.
23. *Sünûhat*, 40.

commentary can be written only by an elevated committee the members of which are specialists in various sciences.[24]

He put forward the same idea in the following lines from his versified work *Lemeât*, which he wrote and published while a member of the Darü'l-Hikmeti'l-İslâmiye:

> "It is consensus and the majority (*cumhur*) which receives the [ratifying] stamp of the Shari'a. The primary condition for calling [others] to an idea is the acceptance of the mass of the people. The call is otherwise innovation, and to be rejected. It gets stuck in the mouth, never to re-emerge..."[25]

In *Emirdağ Lahikası*, in which Bediuzzaman collected together the letters he had written between 1949 and 1952, he set out in slightly clearer form the question discussed in the [Turkish] translation of the introduction to *Ishārāt al-I'jāz* (Signs of Miraculousness), which he had written years before, showing that he persisted in this idea of forty years previously. He wrote:

> "... Everyone may deduce his own rulings and act according to his *ijtihad* (so long as his own whims do not interfere), but they cannot be a proof for others, unless some sort of consensus confirms the ruling. It is most necessary that in order to apply the injunctions of the Shari'a, and to set them in order and execute them, and in order to dispel the anarchy arising from freedom of thought, there is an elevated committee made up of investigative scholars, which, having gained the confidence of the masses as well as that of the majority of the *'ulama*, is a sort of implicit guarantee and defence lawyer for the Umma, and manifests the mystery of the proof of the consensus of the Umma. Then, through the consensus, the result of *ijtihad* may become a principle [recognized by] the Shari'a, and through the confirmation and stamp of the consensus, embrace everyone..."[26]

Moveover, we learn from some sources that Imam A'zam, Abu Hanifa (150/767), the founder of the Hanafi School, debated a question that had been asked of him with a group of forty students in order to reach the level of *ijtihad*, and had it written down.[27]

Moreover, at the present time we see that many people who have written works on Islamic law have been of the opinion that *ijtihad* of this sort is more appropriate for today's conditions.[28]

IV. Miscellaneous Matters Related to *Ijtihad*

A. The *ijtihad* of one *mujtahid* does not bind another

Bediuzzaman states that if a person who fulfils the conditions to carry out *ijtihad* does so, his *ijtihad* is binding only on himself; he cannot force others to conform to it. His opinion is in conformity with the Shari'a, but it is not the Shari'a.

24. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *İşârâtü'l-I'caz*, Istanbul 1993, 8.
25. *Sözler*, 658.
26. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Emirdağ Lahikası*, Istanbul 1959, ii, 89.
27. Hamidullah, Muhammed, *İmam-ı Âzam ve Eseri* [Turk. trans: Kemal Kuşcu], Istanbul 1963, 37-9.
28. See, 'Alī Ḥasabullāh, *Uṣūl al-Tashrī' al-Islāmī*, Egypt 1971, 108; Khalāf, 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Maṣādir al-Tashrī' al-Islāmī*, Kuwait 1970, 13; Karaman, Hayreddin, *İslâm Hukukunda İctihad*, 234-5.

He may be a *mujtahid*, but he cannot be *musharri'*, that is, the one who lays down the Shari'a.[29]

Furthermore, a *mujtahid* is not bound to follow (*taqlid*) another *mujtahid*.[30] As it says in a Hadith,[31] if he is correct in his *ijtihad*, he receives two rewards, while if he is not correct, he still receives one reward, for his effort.[32]

B. The changing of Shari'as according to the age

1. The Shari'a changing according to the age

According to Bediuzzaman, the schools of law emerged because of differences in understanding of the theoretical principles shown by God, the Owner of the Shari'a. The principles known as the essentials of religion and incontestable matters can never be changed in any way. Anyone who does change them has renounced religion.[33] He explains Shari'as changing according the ages as follows:

> "Sacred laws change according to the ages. For in one age a number of different prophets may come, and they have come. Since subsequent to the Seal of the Prophets, his Greater Shari'a is sufficient for all peoples in every age, no need has remained for different laws. However, in secondary matters, the need for different schools has persisted to a degree. Just as clothes change with the change of the seasons and medicines change according to dispositions, so sacred laws change according to the ages, and the ordinances change according to the capacities of peoples. Because the secondary matters of the ordinances of the Shari'a look to human circumstances..."[34]

Then he gives the sociological reasons for the change of Shari'as like this:

> "At the time of the early prophets, since the classes of men were far apart, and their characters both somewhat coarse and violent, and their minds, primitive and close to nomadism, the laws at that time came all in different forms in ways appropriate to their conditions. There were even different prophets and laws in the same continent in the same century. Then, since with the coming of the Prophet of the end of time, man as though advanced from the primitive to the secondary stage, and through numerous revolutions and upheavals reached a position at which all the human peoples could receive a single lesson and listen to a single teacher and act in accordance with a single law, no need remained for different laws, neither was there necessity for different teachers."[35]

2. The wisdom in the emergence of different schools of law

Since despite all these developments, mankind had not all reached the same level, the schools of law emerged. From the social point of view, if all mankind had been at the same level, the schools of law could have united. But since this

29. *Sözler*, 657.
30. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Muhâkemat*, Istanbul 1977, 42.
31. *Bukhārī*, al-I'tiṣām, 21, viii, 157; *Tajrīd al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, xii, 411.
32. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Mektûbat*, Istanbul 1964, 50 / *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Letters 1928-1932*, Istanbul, Sözler Publications 1994, 74.
33. *Mektûbat*, 407 / *Letters*, 544.
34. *Sözler*, 454 / *The Words*, 500.
35. *Sözler*, 454 / *The Words*, 500-1.

has not been possible, they have not united. Bediuzzaman illustrates the differences between the schools of law, although the truth is one, as follows:

> "The same water governs in five different ways in five ill people of different disposition, thus: for one, the water is a cure for his illness, and according to medicine, necessary. For another, it is like poison for his sickness and harmful, and medically prohibited. For another, it causes a small amount of harm, and is reprehensible medically. For another the water is beneficial and without harm; according to medicine that is *Sunna* for him. And for yet another it is neither harmful nor beneficial; he can drink it with good health, and for him it is medically permissible. Thus, here the truth has become numerous; all five are true. Are you able to say: 'The water is only a cure, only necessary, and it governs in no other way.'"[36]

Like in this example, the Divine injunctions change from one school of law to another, but they are all right and good. People who follow the Shafi'i school tend to be peasants and nomads to a greater extent than followers of the Hanafi school, the majority of whom are town-dwellers and civilized. This sociological fact was influential in the emergence of different rulings concerning worship and human relations.[37]

C. The necessity of returning to the Qur'an

Bediuzzaman stated that:

> "It is the sacredness of the source that drives the mass of people to conform [to the precepts of religion]. The books of those qualified to interpret the law (*mujtahidīn*) should be like means and display the Qur'an as though they were glass; they should neither act on its behalf nor obscure it."[38]

Bediuzzaman continues:

> "If the Qur'an had been shown directly in the essentials of religion, the mind would naturally have realized its sacredness, which is the rouser of the conscience, the essential precedent, and urges conformity [to the precepts of religion]. In this way, the heart would have become sensitive towards it, and would not have remained deaf to the admonitions of belief.[39]
>
> "That is to say, while the books of the Shari'a should all have been transparent like glass, in the course of time they became tarnished due to the errors of imitators, obscuring it like a veil. Yes, although these books should have expounded the Qur'an, they became like literary compositions."[40]

Bediuzzaman says that there are three ways attracting the people's gaze directly to the Qur'an, and describes these in turn:

> "There are three ways of directing the attention of the mass of people to the Qur'an, which is the exemplification of the Pre-Eternal Address, shimmers with the attraction of miraculousness, has a halo of sacredness, and constrantly stirs the conscience through belief:
>
> "1. Either the deep respect which the authors truly deserve should be destroyed

36. *Sözler*, 454 / *The Words*, 501.
37. *Sözler*, 455 / *The Words*, 501-2.
38. *Sünûhat*, 31.
39. *Sünûhat*, 32. See also, *Sözler*, 656.
40. *Sünûhat*, 32. See also, *Sözler*, 656.

> through criticism, and that veil removed. But that is dangerous, unfair, and tyrannical;
>
> "2. Or, by means of a gradual, specialist training, to transform the books of the Shari'a into transparent Qur'anic commentaries and show the Qur'an within them, like the works of the early interpreters of the law (*mujtahids*), like the *Muwaṭṭa* and *Fiqh al-Akbar*. For example, when a person looks at Ibn Hajar, he should do so in order to understand the Qur'an and learn what the Qur'an says, not in order to understand what Ibn Hajar said. This second way needs time;
>
> "3. Or, like the sufis, to direct the ordinary peoples' gaze above the veils obscuring it and show the Qur'an; to seek its pure, unmixed property from the Qur'an itself, and only its secondary decrees from the means. The sweetness and attraction of a sufi shaykhs's sermon in relation to a sermon given by a scholar of the Shari'a stems from this."[41]

Bediuzzaman concludes his views on returning to the Qur'an like this:

> "If the essential religious needs of the Islamic community had been sought from the Qur'an itself, that Perspicuous Book would have been the object of a demand greater than that divided up between millions of book because of need, and in this way would have been dominant and influential over people in the full meaning. It would not have been only something 'holy' that was recited for the merit."[42]

The question of reverting to the Qur'an is still discussed extensively in the Islamic world and our own country, and works are written about it and symposia held. However, these are generally in the form that Bediuzzaman did not recommend, of criticizing the *'ulama* of former times. In the question of returning to the Qur'an, as in many other matters, the ideas Bediuzzaman put forward years ago in Ottoman times, are truly apt and balanced.

Conclusion

Bediuzzaman's ideas on *ijtihad* were original to himself and corresponded to the conditions of the day. In his view, although the door of *ijtihad* is open, there are certain obstacles to entering it at this time. He did not leave the idea at that, he analyzed the present social and economic conditions of Muslims from various points of view and offered proof and evidence for his findings. He was also of the opinion that some of the problems of Muslims at this time could be better solved through discussion of a qualified group in the form of consultation. Bediuzzaman's discussions and analyses of the position of the Qur'an, the chief source of the Shari'a, the reasons for the emergence of the schools of law, and other matters related to *ijtihad*, are truly striking.

* * *

41. *Sünûhat*, 32-3.
42. *Sünûhat*, 34.

A Critical Analysis of Bediuzzaman's Treatise On *Ijtihad*

Qutb Mustafa Sanu

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Introduction

This paper is a modest analytical discussion on the Twenty-Seventh Word, which is part of the Risale-i Nur written by the deeply learned Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (May God have mercy on him). On considering the important role of *ijtihad* in the awakening of the Islamic Umma, leading its members to become conscious of their responsibility towards all humanity, I found it appropriate to discuss in this Symposium the ideas on the subject of the great scholar Imam Bediuzaman. It is certainly difficult to discuss an extensive subject like *ijtihad* in a few pages. The present paper is therefore a modest attempt which is the result of the close study of only one of this great scholar's profound treatises, which explains and expounds the subject of *ijtihad* in all its aspects.

My study of *ijtihad* is from the point of view of its being a question dealt with by the science of the principles of *fiqh* (*'ilm al-uṣūl*) which has been a focus of attention and was discussed extensively by Imam Bediuzzaman. At the same time I present it from the intellectual and methodological points of view. Anyone who is well-acquainted with Said Nursi's life would put forward just about the same views about his position on the question. As a research scholar, then, I wanted to do a comprehensive study on his position vis-à-vis the science of the principles of *fiqh*, and the aptness of his views in this field. I hope it will meet with interest and appreciation.

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Leaving everything aside, this modest and limited paper which I am presenting to you may possibly be a milestone in this field, and may also assist in illuminating a number of matters connected with *ijtihad*. I beseech God that I may achieve the aims of this paper.

To come to the method followed in this paper, which is an analytical discussion of Bediuzzaman's treatise on *ijtihad*, we may list it as follows:

a) In addition to the many sub-sections, the subjects of this study are dealt with in two main sections, called 'Parts,' and a conclusion, which includes the conclusions and some proposals.

b) In Part One, I attempt to present Bediuzzaman's views on a number of questions related to *ijtihad*. When doing this, I have tried to make it understood that he explained this question in a way that even those unconnected with the subject may understand.

c) In Part Two, I have attempted to discuss the subject to a modest degree, concentrating on a critical analysis of the treatise. In the last part of this section, I have set out a number of conclusions reached in the paper, and made a number of important proposals that should be given due attention. As a research scholar, I have not forgotten to use deductive and inductive methods and reasoned argument. I hope the best witness to this are the footnotes and sources given in the paper.

The above is a brief look at the method followed. As the effort of someone who seeks the truth and tries to learn it, I have not the slightest doubt that this paper will not shame me. Seeking God's grace, I beseech that His assistance will always be with us and that this paper will be the means to good. If these wishes of ours are achieved, doubtless it will be due to God's grace and munificence. If unknowingly errors have appeared in what I have written, I seek pardon from God. I pray that His support and help is always with us.

And God guides to the smooth path.

PART ONE

Bediuzzaman and Some Questions Related to *Ijtihad*

Introduction

The aim of Part One is to describe Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's (May God be pleased with him) views on a number of matters connected with *ijtihad*. This is necessary in our study of Bediuzzaman's Treatise On *Ijtihad*, in order to put in a scholarly perspective his ideas concerning a number of important matters related to *ijtihad*. At the same time, it will facilitate our making a connection between the questions of *ijtihad* and his ideas. In this First Part the most important of the questions of *ijtihad* are discussed in the light of my views on Bediuzzaman's treatise. This section was written in order to achieve this purpose. Its purpose is

also to clarify the methodological aspects, or aspects that are not clear, in Bediuzzaman's life. At the start I have to emphasize that those of Bediuzzaman's views I have put forward do not reflect all the views on methodology reflected in his works. I have only described in detail and summarized his views on particular subjects.

This chiefly analytical study focusses for the most part on Bediuzzaman's Treatise On *Ijtihad*. I found it appropriate to study the subjects covered in this First Part under two main headings:

1. Bediuzzaman's views on 'correctness' (*isābā* —lit. hitting the mark) and error (*khaṭā'*) in *ijtihad* .
2. The areas *ijtihad* covers according to Bediuzzaman.

A. Bediuzzaman's views on 'correctness' and 'error' in *ijtihad*

The chief questions that have to be discussed in relation to *ijtihad* from the points of view of definition, judgement, and conditions, are the concepts of 'correctness' and 'error' in matters that are not included in the absolute matters of revelation, and are included either certainly or indicatively, or both certainly and indicatively in conjectural matters (*naṣṣ ẓannī*). All the scholars of the principles of fiqh (*uṣūl*) of the past and the present have paid great attention to this important question. Most of the definitions of *ijtihad* made by these scholars have been influenced either directly or indirectly by the sensitivity of the subject. Perhaps too most of them have been influenced by *'taqlid'* in respect on their positions in the subject.

The influence of this matter has not been only from the two aspects we have mentioned. Also influential has been the position of the majority of the *'ulama* vis-à-vis the conditions of *ijtihad*; this factor has been influential on the question either directly or indirectly. This demonstrates the necessity of making clear Bediuzzaman's position. It is necessary to discuss this aspect before learning with God's help of all his views on the matters connected with *ijtihad*. Since it is thus, I shall concentrate the discussion on the subject we described as 'correctness' and 'error.'

'Correctness': the *ijtihad* a *mujtahid* has carried out truly conforming to God's will. In other words, the *mujtahid* passing a correct judgement on a Divine decree.

'Error': the *ijtihad* of a *mujtahid* not being in conformity with a Divine decree or an injunction which for God is determined.

If it said that all *mujtahid*s are 'correct,' it means that any judgement made by a *mujtahid* by means of *ijtihad* is God's judgement. In which case, it would not be right to classify as error the conclusion reached, on the contrary, the judgement would be correct and in conformity with God's will. Whereas if it is said that not all *mujtahids* are 'correct,' it is necessary to qualify this as well, for some *mujtahids* may not be 'correct.' What is meant here is that only a few of the judgements reached by *mujtahids* are not in keeping with the Divine decree, and if among the rest there are some that are in error, most will receive Divine forgiveness.

Thus, in connection with judgements being correct in the sight of God, just as in one question truth will multiply, with regard to error, truth will not multiply. The unity of truth is absolute.

These two expressions having become clear, we should point out that in the books on *uṣūl al-fiqh* (the sources of jurisprudence) there are discussions on this subject under various headings. The most important of these is "Are all *mujtahids* correct? Or is there only one correct *mujtahid* [at any one time]?"[1] This demands that we avoid discussing all aspects of the subject, and suffice with explaining the views set out in the books of *fiqh*, which deal with the dispute between those who are correct and those who are in error, and which are well founded. It is to be hoped that people will understand from this that the dispute has not gone beyond being one of words. Since it is thus, as we pointed out above, the discussions on this subject had far-reaching effects, giving rise to debates such as whether or not the definitions of *ijtihad*, or the judgement reached by a *mujtahid* by means of *ijtihad*, were proofs; or whether or not the conditions of *ijtihad* comprised the following of any particular school of law, and on innumerable other subjects.

For example, concerning definitions of *ijtihad*: someone sees the *'ulama* have defined *ijtihad* in such and such a way, so by way of inference, he exerts himself to make a judgement in accordance with the Shari'a. Or an expert in *fiqh*'s exerting himself to make a ruling in accordance with the Shari'a. These definitions are in fact based on an 'error'. The judgement reached by the *mujtahid* is not in fact a new judgement. If the *mujtahid* is correct, it is a pre-eternal judgement. But if that is not the case, the *mujtahid* is in error. Such scholars, therefore, put the phrase "*Alif. Lām.*" (*lām* of specification) at the head of the legal ordinances. That is to say, the ordinance concerning the event is known by God. In reaching the judgement, the *mujtahid* is not preserved from 'error' and 'correctness'. And so on.

On the other hand, those who do not employ the restriction of "*Alif. Lām.*" while defining *ijtihad*, state that a judgement reached by a *mujtahid* has to be considered to be a judgement determined by God. No matter how far a conclusion may be from that judgement, it still has to be accepted as a specific judgement of God. The principle on which those who support this idea base their belief, is all the matters concerning *ijtihad* of all *mujtahid*s being correct. And so on.

To come to the matter of judgements reached by means of *ijtihad* being sources of authority (*ḥujja*), with the most basic study, anyone may understand the effects of this dispute about the position of the scholars. He may understand in the same way that the person who accepts the judgement reached by a *mujtahid* to be indirectly binding, is in error. For the *mujtahid* chose the judgement knowing it to be "God's specific judgement," which people are not right to

1. See, al-Juwaynī, *al-Burhān fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, 1399H, ii, 1316; al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustaṣfā min 'ilm al-Uṣūl*, ii, 363; al-'Āmidī, *al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, 1984 A.D., iv, 188; Ibn Subkī, *al-Ibhāj fī Sharḥ al-Minhaj*, iii, 257; Bukhārī, *Kashf al-Asrār*, 1991 A.D., iv, 30.

oppose. In consequence, a situation would result whereby, leading to the following (*taqlid*) of the *mujtahids*, a door would be opened indirectly, and the judgements they had reached by means of *ijtihad* would not be gone beyond.

If we consider the question of 'correct' (*maṣūba*—apt, pertinent) views, it just about annuls all that has been said up to here. According to this, the judgements reached by means of *ijtihad* by a *mujtahid* are binding on no one. On the contrary, another person may reach another judgement opposed to the first. Both are right and neither abrogates the other. In this way, truth will multiply to the number of *mujtahids*. It is not right for the truth to remain lifelessly in one place without changing because it is a judgement that was reached by means of *ijtihad*. Indeed, it is not in keeping with wisdom for people to be bound to a single truth in this matter. Everyone should exercise his right of choice, and always have the opportunity to investigate and make independent judgements (*ijtihad*).

To consider the matter of the unquestioning following of previous judgements (*taqlīd*): it may be clearly understood that if it had not been for the efforts of certain people to deprive people of *ijtihad* and investigation, and close fast the door of *ijtihad*, and to build stout barriers before *ijtihad* in order to protect their interests and avoid some of their activities being questioned, the ways before it leading to 'correctness' would have multiplied *ad infinitum*. There is no place for *taqlid* on the way of 'correctness.' Such an attitude quite simply prohibits people from directing their attention and thought towards the injunctions of the Qur'an and Sunna, as the foremost authorities of the early generations of Islam directed their attention. It was because of this that most people became afflicted by narrow-mindedness and lack of endeavour.

However, the overpowering idea of following previous judgements (*taqlid*) among the majority of those who in error have narrowed as far as was possible all judgements reached by means of *ijtihad*, have opposed the conclusions reached by any or all the *mujtahids*—however powerful and superior they are in relation to the views of the past. If there had been no concept of 'error', the thing called *taqlid* would not have arisen; certain anxieties would not have given rise to it. It was such a thought that gave rise to 'unquestioning following.' That is to say, the idea that God's determined rulings were single rulings and that they could not multiply by means of *ijtihad*, willy nilly necessitated adhering to and following a single ruling. This is the essence of *taqlid*, which compels those who hold the idea to accept not that peoples' knowledge is limited by truth, but that knowledge of the truth is limited by a number of people. At the same time it is true that some supporters of the concept of 'error' were opposed to the idea of *taqlid* and definitely did not believe in such a thing. For it was a consequence of the conclusions they reached and put forward. In this way, from the point of view of the concept of 'error', no place remained for *taqlid* and having to be bound to it.

Since this is the case, we can say in all earnestness that according to the Mu'taziliya and Ash'ariyya and some of the learned authorities of the early generations, in matters of *ijtihad* the concept of 'correctness' is more suitable than

that of 'error,' and takes precedence over it. If the procedure of *ijtihad* is to answer the needs of life and assist in its development... Otherwise it will be a powerful means of suppressing understandings of *ijtihad* that are affected by changing conditions and situations, and changes in time and place and custom. This means on the one hand defending the idea of an eternal religion, and on the other not considering matters in the light of continuously changing events, and various customs and practices. Moreover, it is wrong to limit *ijtihad* to reaching judgements in accordance with the Shari'a related only to the matters of the present age, for the concept is much wider and more comprehensive than this. Included within the concept is exertion to understand the Divine decrees related to conjectural matters of the Qur'an and Sunna. However, a *mujtahid* of the past may have reached a judgement in this field having been influenced by the conditions under which he lived, and by that time and place and its customs and traditions, and have therefore followed a wrong course, yet had the opinion that it was truly a ruling in accordance with an injunction of the Shari'a. In fact, a *mujtahid* choosing one of two *ijtihads* should also be considered within the framework of *ijtihad*. Such an *ijtihad* does not make the views of the scholars living at that time defective. Analogies may be made with this for other matters.

One who studies the books of the principles of *fiqh* (*uṣūl*) will see that the concept of 'correctness' has been favoured over that of 'error.' This is the case despite the sword of *taqlid* hanging over the matters concerning which the *mujtahids* had to practise *ijtihad*. In my opinion, the underlying reason for this is that although the *'ulama* opened the door of *ijtihad* as far as they could, the science of the principles of *fiqh* (*'ilm al-uṣūl*) —which is seriously opposed to *taqlid* and those who support it— did not feel the need to alert people to this fact.

I want to conclude this discussion with a piece written by a scholar who has carried out much research in this field:

> "If we consider the position of Muslims today, the way of the school of those supporting the concept of 'correctness' is the best for treating this sickness. For it drives the *'ulama* to practise *ijtihad* in order to understand the conjectural injunctions, and come up with the ideas necessary to situate the numerous claims made in the field of religion within a specific framework. Their ideas will be then tied to the principles most fitting for present conditions. We see that the *mujtahids* of former times put forward particular ideas concerning matters of this sort in connection with *ijtihad*, but they were in a form suitable to the conditions of their own times. The conditions have to be reconsidered, then a fresh understanding of *ijtihad* has to be acquired in accordance with Divine wishes, which is feasible, practicable, and capable of reform. We may then consider *ijtihad* suitably to the needs of Muslims of the present day and its realities. This will take us to an idea of 'correctness' which is far removed from *taqlid*, purified of the interference of personal desires and satanic dissension, and will head us for renewal..."[2]

I have acquired wide knowledge about this discussion, which is included in scholarly and practical works, though doubtless the question is not limited to what I have mentioned. In connection with the concept of 'correctness', which

2. Najjār, 'Abd al-Majīd, *Fī Fiqh al-Tadwīn*, Qatar, i, 89.

has been the subject of extensive discussion and debate among the scholars of *uṣūl*, I felt the need to refer to the great scholar Bediuzzaman. I tried to study deeply and closely this great imam's views so as to be able to find the answers to these questions. I believe that with God's help and assistance he put forward pertinent views on this question. I shall show as evidence for this claim, some of the things he wrote about the subject either explicitly or implicitly. First, I shall give a quote showing implicitly that in the matter of *ijtihad* he was a supporter of the concept of 'correctness' (*muṣawwiba*). Then I shall mention other matters that support this. Firstly, my implicit evidence. Bediuzzaman said:

> "...When the inclination to expand and will to interpret the Shari'a were present in those who had entered the domain of Islam through the door of perfect *taqwa* and the way of conforming to the Islam's essential teachings, like the authorities of the first generations of Islam, that was a perfection and being perfected."[3]

This passage shows clearly that he was one of those who believed that 'correctness' would increase with the multiplication and differentiation of views, and that truth might multiply with the increase of *mujtahids*. As may be understood, according to this, *mujtahids* could not speak out against those holding opposing views, and could not oppose ideas contrary to their own. For they are not the lawgivers. For lawgiving necessitates compulsion. In other words, lawgiving in respect of compulsion pertains solely to those holding power and sovereignty. That is, it requires the promulgation of laws and their application. The *mujtahid* is remote from possessing any such capability. His views are open only to discussion and reference. On error being revealed in them, they may be rejected, or the aspects of error made clear.

Moving on from this we reach this point: Bediuzzaman supported those who discussed the question of 'correctness'; he agreed with this principle, that is, with the multiplication of views; and was of the opinion that the truth might multiply with the multiplication of those who put forward ideas about the questions of *ijtihad* concerning which were no absolute (*muṭlaq*) injunctions of the Qur'an and Sunna, or concerning conjectural (*ẓannī*) injunctions which had been subject to different interpretations.

The following passage is sufficient to show that he supported the theory of 'correctness'. It confirms the above quote, further corroborating our assertion. We may hear from Bediuzzaman himself his answer to a question about whether the truth was 'one' despite the various rulings of the four schools of law and the twelve imams:

> "***If you say:*** The truth is one; how can the different ordinances of the four and twelve schools be true?
>
> "***The Answer:*** The same water governs in five different ways in five ill people of different disposition, thus: for one, the water is a cure for his illness, and according to medicine, necessary. For another, it is like poison for his sickness and harmful, and medically prohibited. For another, it causes a small amount of harm, and is

3. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Sözler*, İstanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1980, 451 / *The Words* [English trans.], İstanbul, Sözler Publications 1993, 497.

> reprehensible medically. For another the water is beneficial and without harm; according to medicine that is *Sunna* for him. And for yet another it is neither harmful nor beneficial; he can drink it with good health, and for him it is medically permissible. Thus, here the truth has become numerous; all five are true. Are you able to say: 'The water is only a cure, only necessary, and it governs in no other way.'
>
> "Similarly, impelled by Divine wisdom, the Divine ordinances change according to the schools of law and those who follow them, and they change as truth, and each is true and right."[4]

As is seen from the above passage, Bediuzzaman states clearly his position on the matter of 'correctness' and 'error.' At the same time, he is considering what the scholars of *uṣūl* have said on the matter from the depths of past up to the present. They fell into dispute over the method of proceeding in the above-mentioned debate. While they supported their own views with evidences deduced by means of reasoning from various Qur'anic verses and Hadiths, Imam Bediuzzaman never himself employed the method of deductive reasoning to ascertain the accuracy of what they said on the subject of 'correctness.' He rather gave practical examples, as he preferred to do when putting forward all his views, and explained the questions most convincingly, supporting his assertions with them.

If we want to consider how successful he was with this method, certainly he took it from the Qur'an and Sunna. Far from incomprehensible examples and hypotheses, he gave practical examples which conformed to reality when explaining and proving his views. In addition, he offered an implicit or indirect proof that I have been unable to find in any other scholar who preferred the theory of 'correctness' to that of 'error' in the matters of *ijtihad*. We can see this proof among the various examples that he gave.

In addition to accepting that fundamentally truth is one, it is his view that just as since with differences of conditions, customs, traditions, and time and place, *mujtahids* multiply, so the truth may multiply. It is as though he wanted to say the following in connection with this: although basically truth and reality are one, truth multiplying does mean it in fact changes. In reality, it is the bifurcation and multiplication of truth. Numerous external factors cause the multiplication of aspects of the truth. It is differences in situations, conditions, time, place, and understanding that give rise to differences in views and *ijtihads*. The *mujtahid* is influenced by these different factors, which open up the way to a single truth splitting into different branches. This leads one to ask whether or not the truth multiplies. It is my view that by indicating this, Imam Bediuzzaman was inferring that people's minds and hearts should be broadened so they accept a variety of views in the matters of *ijtihad*. For the factors influencing them are numerous, as we said above. Similarly, they may effect a reconciliation between people in a way pleasing to God. For God created men in the best way and laid down differences in conditions, time and place, not to provoke conflict, but to establish togetherness. Since they are all different by nature, people are certainly

4. *Sözler*, 454-5/ *The Words*, 501.

going to differ in their learning and actions. In should not be forgotten that only our glorious Creator has the authority to lay down compelling laws and injunctions which are binding on all men. Therefore, no one should overstep his mark and try to impose his own views on others under the guise of their being God's views.

Imam Bediuzzaman emphasizes the importance of the theory of 'correctness' in the matters of *ijtihad* within the above understanding, and follows it immediately with a practical example, explaining that due to the different factors we mentioned above, the branches of truth may increase in number. He says:

> "For example, since, in accordance with Divine wisdom and determining, the majority of those who follow Imam Shafi'i are closer to village life and nomadism than the Hanafis, and are deficient in social life, which makes the community like a single body, each recites the *Fatiha* behind the prayer-leader so as to himself voice his afflictions at the Court of the Dispenser of Needs and utter his private wishes. And this is absolutely right and pure wisdom. However, since most Islamic governments have favoured the school of Imam-i A'zam, the great majority of those who follow that school are closer to civilization and town life, and more fitted for social life. Thus, the community becomes like a single individual and one man speaks in the name of all; all affirm him with their hearts and bind their hearts to his and his word becomes the word of all; according to the Hanafi school, the *Fatiha* is not recited behind the prayer-leader. And its not being recited is absolutely right and pure wisdom."[5]

With this example, Bediuzzaman is drawing attention to the conditions at the time the two great imams lived. As is clear, these conditions were very influential in the formation of their attitudes, and at the same time, in the application of them, and in their preferences when practising *ijtihad* on the injunctions of the Qur'an and Sunna. Imam Shafi'i (May God be pleased with him) was also influenced by conditions when he ruled that it was obligatory for both the imam and all members of the congregation to recite the *Fatiha* during the five daily prayers, making that his preference, so was Abu Hanifa (May God be pleased with him) affected by them when he stated that this was not obligatory. By pointing this out, Bediuzzaman is admitting the role of the factors mentioned above in the formation of the schools of law, giving rise to their different tendencies. Anyway, nomadism is certainly nothing to be belittled or found fault with, any more than town life is to be exalted over other ways of life. None is superior to the others. Each has its own qualities and characteristics. It should not therefore be concluded from this example of Bediuzzaman that he considered the Shafi'i school to be deficient —he anyway belonged to it— or that he was exalting the Hanafi school. For he did not put forward his ideas in order to please God's servants, rather than God.

To conclude, we may make the following summary: As was seen in the first example, Bediuzzaman was of the view that the theory of 'correctness' should be preferred to that of 'error.' In the other example he is stressing that conditions, situation, time and place all have an effect on the ideas concerning *ijtihad*, and a role in them, and that they give rise to the emergence of various different aspects of the same truth.

5. *Sözler*, 455 / *The Words*, 501.

We here conclude the discussion about Bediuzzaman's preference for the theory of 'correctness' in order to study his other views and analyses related to the science of the principles of *fiqh*.

B. The areas of *ijtihad* according to Bediuzzaman

The following discussion complements the preceding one. In it, the field of action of a person qualified to perform *ijtihad* and exert himself in this field will be dwelt on with a view to its importance and outlook. The fact that the *'ulama* disputed among themselves about the theory of 'correctness' and 'error' in *ijtihad* does not mean it was at any time a general or absolute conflict. For it was not something other than religion; this fundamental difference connected with *ijtihad* must be thought of and accepted as concerning limited matters of the Qur'an and Sunna which are expressed in a specific way in specific areas. It emerges from this that the areas of the dispute should be defined, for in the previous section the subject was not completed. This compels us to turn to the above-mentioned discussion in order to understood the subject more precisely, and to direct all our attention and thought to it since it is connected with the two phrases Bediuzzaman used.

So we say that what is intended from the area encompassing the matters related to *ijtihad* is that which includes the exertions, disputes, and works of the *mujtahids*. These are matters about which injunctions exist in the Qur'an and Sunna, but are conjectural or surmised because of either the way they are arrived at, or their evidences, or both, or they are matters about which there are definitely no injunctions. The degrees of the *ijtihads* made about various matters show differences according to both situations. In the same way, they have the necessary limits and bases which should not be ignored under any circumstances. If we consider the matters arrived at by the conjectural injunctions, the *mujtahid's* function is primarily to establish and corroborate whether or not such an injunction is authentic so that he may either accept the judgement indicated by it, or reject it due to the way it was arrived at, and then put forward a ruling by means of *ijtihad*.

In the history of Islam, numerous scholars of Hadith took pains to set forth a science establishing the principles of *ijtihad* and their relations to the chains of authorities of the Hadiths. This science became known as *'ilm al-riwāya* (a branch of *'ilm al-muṣṭalaḥ*). It is unthinkable that a *mujtahid* should ignore the principles of this science, which were formulated with great care by the authorities of the early generations of Islam and have been preserved throughout the centuries.

To consider the matters whose evidences are related to conjectural ordinances; here the efforts of the *mujtahids* are directed towards choosing the possible evidences and meanings in these injunctions with the aim of discovering the

meaning the Lawgiver intended. Generally, this *ijtihad* is influenced by factors like language, understanding, custom, conditions, time and place. What I mean by this is time, place and scholarship having a strong influence when the *mujtahid* makes a choice between one meaning and another. In one respect he relies in this endeavour on a specific method within a specific framework. The matters connected with conjectural injunctions reached by means of deduction and induction, comprise the situation of *ijtihad*, which necessitates the combining of the two procedures mentioned above. All *mujtahids* have their own ways and methods in his matter.

Very extensive knowledge and expertise are necessary in order to practise *ijtihad* in matters in which there are neither incontrovertible injunctions in the Qur'an and Sunna, nor conjectural injunctions. Such knowledge and expertise are employed with great attention in order to understand the aims and purposes of the Shari'a. Since such a subject has shared aspects with similar injunctions, it may be included under a general rule or among conjectural injunctions, and analogies be drawn between it and judgements passed on similar cases. The *mujtahid's* function in such cases is to display even wider understanding, decision, and attention than in matters concerning which injunctions exist.

Since the matter is thus, the area in which *ijtihad* may be practised in 'understanding' (*al-fahm*) is restricted to the matters indicated above. That is, this situation arises in discussion of rulings which foresee *ijtihad* about some matter from the broad ocean of the injunctions of the Qur'an and Sunna and their solution. In which case, one may not pass beyond the boundary of understanding mentioned above. It therefore cannot be expected that a reliable *mujtahid* will practise *ijtihad* about injunctions the certainty of which has been established by deduction, such an *ijtihad* would not be considered acceptable. What this amounts to is there being no scope for *ijtihad* by way of 'understanding.'

Returning from this point to the subject of 'correctness' and 'error' in *ijtihad*, we can say that *ijtihad* is permissible within specific fields, which Bediuzzaman indicated indirectly but most eloquently. We may summarize as follows the areas we have extracted from various topics.

The First Area: Secondary matters

What is meant by this are matters concerning which are either incontestable injunctions in the Qur'an or Sunna, or conjectural injunctions which have been reached by either deduction or induction. Bediuzzaman alludes to these matters in censuring those with pretensions to practising *ijtihad* at this time. He says:

> "However, since those who make interpretations at the present time make those essentials [that is, the fundamental teachings] the means to ordinances of the Shari'a, their interpretations are earthly, the products of their own fancies, tainted by philosophy, and cannot be heavenly or revealed, or in accordance with the Shari'a."[6]

In another place he alludes to the difference between secondary matters pertaining to conjectural matters (*zannī naṣṣ*) reached either by inference or deduction, or by both, and fundamental matters concerning which are incontrovertible injunctions. He describes the first area for *ijtihad* like this:

> "The essential teachings of religion demand that independent judgements (*ijtihad*) do not enter them, for they are specified and definite. Moreover, they are like basic food and sustenance. At this time, while all effort and endeavour should be expended on their being upheld and raised to life, they are being abandoned and degraded."[7]

In this passage, Bediuzzaman is emphasizing strongly that in no way may *ijtihad* be practised in the field of the fundamental teachings of religion established by the incontrovertible injunctions of the Qur'an and Sunna. The *mujtahid's* function here is not to try to expand these fundamentals by means of *ijtihad*, nor to interfere with them on any account.

It is seen plainly from the above that in Bediuzzaman's view the first area in which *ijtihad* may be practised are those injunctions which are conjectural either in regard to the way they are arrived at or inferred. He on many occasions described this field as being of the subsidiary category, pointing out that these injunctions were not of the same degree as the incontrovertible and fundamental matters of religion. Although I have studied the author's works, I have not been able to glean much information about these secondary matters. He uses the term therefore in the same way that other *'ulama* use it. They have all used it to refer to matters of *fiqh* and *ijtihad*. Just as by 'fundamental' or 'principal matters' (*masā'il-i uṣūliya*) they have meant those incontrovertible matters which by reason of their certainty, clarity, and specificity, may not be opposed.

The Second Area: New situations which arise with the passage of time

Everything apart, Bediuzzaman did not consider the above to be the sole area of *ijtihad*; there were other areas that could be entered without anxiety or hesitation. In the first field, if *ijtihad* could take on a desirable form, new developments and circumstances about which there were no injunctions would demand fresh and more important *ijtihad*. This second area of *ijtihad* is that of new events and circumstances about which the Lawgiver has laid down no injunction. Bediuzzaman alludes to this field as follows:

> "The *ijtihad* in matters other than those laid down by the Qur'an and Sunna performed by anyone qualified to practise *ijtihad*, is binding on himself only, not on others."[8]

In an important passage describing the reasons for the change in injunctions with the changing of conditions, time and place, Bediuzzaman discusses *ijtihad* from another useful angle:

> "Sacred laws change according to the ages. Indeed, in one age a number of different prophets may come, and they have come. Since subsequently to the Seal of the Prophets, his Greater Shari'a is sufficient for all peoples in every age, no need has remained for different laws. However, in secondary matters, the need for different

6. *Sözler*, 452 / *The Words*, 498.

7. *Sözler*, 449 / *The Words*, 495.

8. *Sözler*, 657.

schools has remained to a degree. Just as clothes change with the change of the seasons and medicines change according to dispositions, so sacred laws change according to the ages, and the ordinances change according to the capacities of peoples. For the secondary matters of the ordinances of the Shari'a look to human circumstances; they come according to them, and are like medicine."[9]

The sentences "The *ijtihad* in matters other than those laid down by the Qur'an and Sunna performed by anyone qualified to practise *ijtihad*, is binding on himself only" and "medicines change according to dispositions, so sacred laws change according to the ages, and the ordinances change according to the capacities of peoples. For the secondary matters of the ordinances of the Shari'a look to human circumstances" indicate the two areas where *ijtihad* may be practised. Also indicating indirectly the first field of *ijtihad*, it lists them in this way: extracting legal rulings from the matters of the Qur'an and Sunna; specifying general matters; limiting absolute matters; making detailed matters that are concise; making clear matters that are vague; removing difficulties; and revealing matters that are obscure. Included in these may be making rulings by adding — due to their shared causes— to matters about which injunctions exist, matters about which there are none. Basically, all these stem from a good understanding of injunctions the proof for which is conjectural.

The above two passages refer to matters concerning which are no absolute injunctions. That is, they infer that *ijtihad* is permissible and desirable in matters concerning which there are no injunctions in the Qur'an and Sunna, and about which there has been no previous consensus (*ijmā'*). The function of *ijtihad* in these matters is to find solutions for these matters by making rulings within the framework of the universal principles and the general rules of the Shari'a. This requires someone who understands the aims of the Shari'a and its purposes and whose thought is focussed on these, and also has a good understanding of the role of secondary evidences like *maṣāliḥ al-mursala*, *istiḥsān*, and *sadd al-dharā'i'*. Moreover, there is no necessity for these matters to have comprehensive shared causes (*'illa*), or injunctions comprising universal principles, or general rules of the Shari'a.

To summarize what has been stated so far: what Bediuzzaman has written covers both the areas in which *ijtihad* may be carried out.

As is to be seen clearly, it should be stated that the theory of 'correctness' and 'error' applies in both areas and includes the matters connected with both. Here, the area which contains questions related to injunctions that are incontestable both by inference and by deduction is outside our discussion. So an *ijtihad* carried out in these two fields which exceeds the bounds means it is not a serious attempt and puts the one making it in error. It may even result in the loss of justice and piety, which are conditions for a sound and reliable *ijtihad*, and for the one making it to forfeit his right to carry out *ijtihad*.

Therefore, with complete confidence we can say that Imam Bediuzzaman was successful in limiting the areas of *ijtihad* and setting the question of 'correctness' and 'error' in *ijtihad* on sound foundations. At the same time, like Imam Shawkani, he followed the way of the eminent authorities of the principles of *fiqh* in this matter. Shawkani wrote the following about this:

9. *Sözler*, 454 / *The Words*, 500.

"Know that the matter which is the subject of *ijtihad* is an injunction of the Shari'a pertaining to actions. In *al-Maḥṣūl*, the author (he is referring to Razi) says: 'The matter which is the subject of *ijtihad*: there is no incontrovertible proof for any ordinance of the Shari'a [concerning it]. We separated from the ordinances of the Shari'a the sciences of reason and the questions of *kalām* (scholastic theology). We say that there is no incontrovertible proof concerning the five daily prayers and obligatory payment of *zakat*, but all the authorities are agreed on these rulings of the Shari'a.'"[10]

The above sentence "there is no incontrovertible proof for any ordinance of the Shari'a [concerning it]" encompasses the two areas that Bediuzzaman alludes to and corroborates what he writes. Doubtless what is meant by "ordinance of the Shari'a" are the questions open to *ijtihad*. That is, questions which are surmised to be injunctions of the Shari'a, and which are reached by means of *ijtihad*. I cannot prevent myself saying it: a matter concerning which is no absolute ordinance may be the subject of *ijtihad*. The same is true for a matter concerning which there is an ordinance which is not incontrovertible. For a thing scrutinized in order to make a conjectural ruling of the Shari'a is another area of *ijtihad*.

We conclude here our examination of the fields of *ijtihad* through the eyes of Bediuzzaman and previous scholars of *uṣūl*, with fine analysis and sound detail. I found it appropriate to lend an ear to a scholar of the present, Dr. Yusuf al-Qardawi, who has put forward ideas similar to theirs. He writes as follows at the end of an article about *ijtihad*, stating that it has gained currency in two fields:

"***The First*** is an area concerning which there is no injunction, not due to the forgetfulness of the Lawgiver, but because he has left it to us out of mercy. The purpose is so that the *mujtahids* will fill these empty spaces by means of analogy, and other ways like *al-maṣlaḥat al-mursala*, *istiḥsān*, *istiṣḥāb al-ḥāl*, and so on, keeping in view the purposes of the Lawgiver suitably to the methods of *ijtihad*. As is well-known, there are numerous injunctions carrying much detail related to fields like worship and family matters, for they do not change with changes in time and place. Moreover, there is need in these areas for there to be certain injunctions which as far as is possible are not open to dispute. On the other hand, there are areas concerning which the injunctions are as few as possible or are general, concise, and absolute. These recognize the freedom to carry out *ijtihad* in the light of certain general principles suitably to the conditions of the time and what is beneficial to individuals and society, where there are no detailed injunctions limiting and controlling conduct through laws concerning the conditions of consultation (*shūrā*), government, administration, and their application.

"***The Second*** are the areas concerning which there are conjectural injunctions, including those the existence (*thubūt*) of which is conjectural (*zannī*). The greater part of the Hadiths of the Prophet (PBUH) are of this sort, and included in it are those the proof of which is also conjectural. We can place many of the Qur'anic

10. Shawkānī, *Irshād al-Fuḥūl*, Cairo 1992, ii, 304.

injunctions in this section. Contrary to what some sceptics think, there being an injunction about a subject does not prevent it being the subject of *ijtihad*. Similarly, some people suppose that there are no injunctions in the Qur'an that may be subject to *ijtihad*. It is possible to approach these differently. The Holy Qur'an itself contains within it different understandings. For example, if you consider the verse about ritual purification in Sura al-Ma'ida and study the different rulings drawn from it, you will agree that what I have said is right. ...

"Besides these two areas of the Shari'a which are open to *ijtihad* is an area that *ijtihad* cannot enter, which has no need for it and which is closed to having rulings made about it. This is the area covered by the incontestable matters of the Shari'a. The incontrovertible injunctions concerning obligatory acts like the five daily prayers and *zakāt*; prohibited acts like adultery, usury and interest, and drinking alcohol; the rulings about inheritance laid down by the clear rulings of the Qur'an, and those concerning punishments, retaliation, and divorce; these injunctions form the area in which *ijtihad* is prohibited. These are injunctions whose evidence (*dalāla*) and existence (*thubūt*) is incontestable. *Ijtihad* cannot affect them. They form the basis of the Umma's unity of thought and action...."[11]

May God be pleased with Imam Bediuzzaman, who made sound statements on this question, elucidating with great attention the above-mentioned areas of *ijtihad*. And may He also reward in the best way the scholars of the principles of *fiqh* who laid the foundations of the subject. And may God give long life to the scholar al-Qardawi, who has illuminated us with the above piece...

PART TWO

A Critical Analysis of Bediuzzaman's Treatise On *Ijtihad*

Introduction

We have seen some of Bediuzzaman's views on the subjects related to *ijtihad*. I found it suitable in this Second Part to include an analysis of the views put forward in his Treatise On *Ijtihad* (*İctihad Risalesi*, the Twenty-Seventh Word), which reflects a high level of knowledge. The aim of the present section is to show that Bediuzzaman —a scholar of our times— truly reached the level of *ijtihad* as practised from innumerable different angles by the qualified and the unqualified down the centuries, and to describe his ideas on the matter. This study includes a discussion of the conditions obtaining when the treatise was written, and in addition contains an analysis and discussion of the ideas expressed in it and its contents. I hope to conclude the discussion by setting out the conclusions of the study and listing a number of, in my view necessary, proposals. I beseech God that he will make what I write germane and to the point.

I have set out this Second Part under four main headings:

A. The circumstances of Bediuzzaman's Treatise On *Ijtihad*, and the prevailing conditions at the time it was written.

11. *Majallat al-Ummat al-Qaṭariyya* No: 45, 46 ff.

B. An analysis of the ideas expressed in the treatise.

C. A critique of the ideas.

D. The conclusions drawn from the study and some proposals.

A. The circumstances of the Treatise On *Ijtihad* and the prevailing conditions at the time it was written

General points about the treatise

1. A definition of the treatise

It is a work on the subject of *ijtihad* which was included in the *Mathnawī al-'Arabī al-Nūrī*, written by Bediuzzaman in Arabic. On the request of students of the Risale-i Nur, the author himself rewrote the work (in Turkish) and included it in *Sözler*, part of the Risale-i Nur Collection. To summarize, the work discusses the obstacles preventing the opening of the door of theoretical *ijtihad* in the century in which the author lived, and therefore describes the six obstacles before *ijtihad* at this time. These obstacles are described in detail accompanied by examples and reasoned proofs.

2. The purpose of the treatise

The purpose of the treatise is to refute the claims made by those who supported the practice of *ijtihad* in Bediuzzaman's time. Relying on powerful proofs, it endeavours to close the door of *ijtihad* before those making these claims. The reasons for this and the above-mentioned obstacles are dealt with in detail. The following sentence in the introductory passage to the treatise shows this clearly:

"Five or six years ago in an Arabic treatise, I wrote concerning a matter to do with independent judgements on points of the Shari'a (*ijtihad*). Now, at the request of two of my brothers, this Word was written about that matter in order to put in his place someone who had overstepped the mark in his attacks on it."[12]

3. The date the treatise was written

According to the writer of Bediuzzaman's biography in Arabic, entitled *Badī'u'z-zamān Sa'īd al-Nūrsī, Naẓara 'Āmma 'an Ḥayātihi wa Āthārihi*, Bediuzzaman originally wrote this treatise in Ankara in 1923 as part of the work *Mathnawī al-'Arabī al-Nūrī*. He wrote: "In 1923 the following treatises were published... those he published in Ankara were *Dhayl al-Dhayl — al-Ḥabāb* in Arabic, and the other parts of *Mathnawī al-'Arabī al-Nūrī*..."[13]

The following may be understood from the above passage: he wrote this treatise as part of the above-mentioned work in Arabic when about fifty years of age and while a member of the Darü'l-Hikmeti'l-İslâmiye. It is most likely that he translated it into Turkish around 1929 or '30 and included it in the Risale-i Nur. This is alluded to in the introductory passage to the Twenty-Seventh Word: "Five or six years ago in an Arabic treatise, I wrote concerning a matter to do

12. *Sözler*, 448 / *The Words*, 495.

13. al-Salihi, Ihsan Qasim, *Badī'u'z-Zamān Sa'īd al-Nūrsī, Naẓara 'Āmma 'an Ḥayātihi wa Āthārihi*, Istanbul, Sözler Neşriyat 1987, 84.

with independent judgements on points of the Shari'a. Now, at the request of two of my brothers, this Word was written... "[14]

We may therefore conclude that the work, which was originally written in Arabic, demonstrates the author's profound knowledge of that language and eloquent use of it. At the same time, he followed closely events in the Islamic world and insisted that it was wrong to ignore the assaults on the Islamic world and grapple with the problems of *ijtihad*; instead, all effort and endeavour should be expended on striving against the enemy and in dispelling the awesome sicknesses afflicting Islam.

This brief description of Bediuzzaman's Treatise On *Ijtihad* shows the necessity of discussion about the reasons for the writing of the work in Arabic and the circumstances at the time it was written. I have therefore allotted the following section to this topic. May God grant me success...

4. The effect of the conditions prevailing at the time the treatise was written[15]

History shows us that Bediuzzaman strove not only with his tongue but also with his sword. He vehemently opposed the Ottomans entering the First World War, for just as the Empire was not prepared for war, so its outcome could not be in its interests. He therefore believed that it was futile for Turkey to enter it. But when that infernal war erupted, he fought with all his strength to defend his country. For he was a soldier of the state, a *mujahid* defending his religion and country. The enemy had overwhelming superiority in numbers and strength. The Russian army was endeavouring to occupy the towns of Islam with the help of the Armenian brigands. Erzurum was the first town to fall to them. Another town that was occupied was Bitlis. Bediuzzaman was a member of the army that resisted the Russians. Together with other soldiers of Islam fighting in that *jihad*, Bediuzzaman was taken prisoner by the Russians. Finally after two years and four months of captivity, he was saved through Divine grace.

According to some writers who have studied Bediuzzaman's life, he wrote a number of works in Arabic during the course of the War, one of which was the *Mathnawī al-'Arabī al-Nūrī*, of which the subject of our study, the Treatise On *Ijtihad*, is a part.[16]

Having set out these facts, a person thinking that the treatise was written before 1918, will suppose that it was composed under conditions of war, with its psychological, social, and economic effects. However, anyone who studies it carefully will not accept such a view and will deem it most unlikely, for the language used in the work is most definitely not one affected by the atmosphere and conditions of war. This brings us to the fact that it was written during the two years we mentioned above. If we take this hypothesis, we may say that although he wrote it at that time, he published it not then but after 1923. This is what is to be understood from the book we mentioned above.

14. *Sözler*, 449 / *The Words*, 495.
15. *Badī'u'z-Zamān Sa'īd al-Nūrsī, Naẓara 'Āmma 'an Ḥayātihi wa Āthārihi*, 37 ff.
16. al-Nūrsī, Badī'u'z-Zamān Sa'īd, *Ḥaqīqat al-Tawḥīd* (Muqaddima) [trans: Ihsan Qasim al-Salihi], Baghdad 1405H.

Thus, if we do not accept that it was written in the atmosphere of the Great War, we have to accept that it was influenced not by the conditions of war, but by the lack of aspiration which many people suffered after the defeat of the Ottomans. One who reads Bediuzzaman will see that his discussion of the subject reflects the sorrow he felt at the grievous plight of the Ottoman Empire. And it is not difficult to understand that before everything he called on the people of this age to once again conform to the incontestable injunctions and fundamental matters of religion, which they had neglected and fallen away from, and that he concentrated all his effort and striving on this, insisting on its necessity.

In his view, efforts should not be dissipated and wasted unnecessarily, but be marshalled to achieve the chief goal. People should first and foremost adhere to the essential matters of religion. He said in connection with this: "Independent judgements (*ijtihad*) may not be made about the essential teachings of religion, for they are specified and definite. Moreover, they are like basic food and sustenance. At this time, they are being abandoned and degraded."[17] The following explains this more fully:

> "The essential teachings of religion demand that independent judgements do not enter them, for they are specified and definite. Moreover, they are like basic food and sustenance. At this time while all effort and endeavour should be expended to uphold them and raise them to life, they are being abandoned and degraded. So to give them up, despite their being among the theoretical matters of Islam and due to being the pure and disinterested interpretations of the first generations of Islam are not inadequate for the needs of all times, and to make new interpretations of the Law in arbitrary fashion, is an innovation and betrayal of Islam."[18]

Another meaning intended by this is that to give priority to the essentials of religion is another *ijtihad*. All endeavour being focussed on the essentials of religion was a striving (*mujāhada*) aimed at reviving and re-establishing them.

There was no benefit in expanding *ijtihad* in conjectural matters when the incontestable matters were being lost, forgotten, or ignored, —besides the jurisprudence (*fiqh*) of past centuries concerned with theoretical and practical matters.

We may therefore state clearly that the underlying reason Bediuzzaman wrote a work on this subject was the all-pervading atmosphere of neglect and indifference towards the essential matters of religion. He tried to alert people to this matter, who did not understand the gravity of the situation and could not interpret it correctly. It was quite simply as though he wanted to say that at the present time the Umma had no need of theoretical *ijtihad* in order to deduce rulings from the conjectural injunctions of the Qur'an and Sunna. In fact, one of the conditions of *ijtihad* is knowledge of current events and circumstances (*'ilm al-ḥāl*), as well as understanding the future significance of the Lawgiver's ordinances. Anyone not possessing this qualification does not have the right to knock on the door of *ijtihad*. Indeed, the door should be closed on him and he should be prevented from entering it.

17. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, İstanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1980, 82.
18. *Sözler*, 449-50 / *The Words*, 495.

Another reason for Bediuzzaman's writing on this subject was the great number of people in the age in which he lived who, although they were not sufficiently knowledgeable in the principles of *fiqh*, had aspirations to practise *ijtihad*. The science of the principles of *fiqh* (*'ilm al-uṣūl*) is accepted to be the chief pillar and unshakeable, powerful support of the procedure of *ijtihad*. A person who has acquired sufficient knowledge of this science has taken an important step towards *ijtihad*. In the face of any question, the *mujtahid* is sufficiently knowledgeable to distinguish the reason for it and its purpose, its benefits and its aims, the things necessitating it and the need for it, and the things making it desirable.

Bediuzzaman observed that many of those who attempted *ijtihad* lacked the qualifications, so he wrote the work to be a barrier between them and *ijtihad*. If he had not seen such a deficiency at that time, he would not have written it. He would not have opposed them, nor directed his attention in this way towards those eager to practise *ijtihad*.

Furthermore, it has to be remembered that some of the *fatwa's* appearing at that time were issued under the constraint and at the command of the occupying forces.[19] Such a situation showed the want of concern for religion, the hypocrisy of some opportunist scholars and that some of them had fallen prey to the sickness of self-interest and ambition. If the circumstances had not been thus, Bediuzzaman would not have felt the need to write the treatise severely opposing those attempting *ijtihad* this age.

In short: In addition to weakness in adhering to religion being an important cause of his writing this treatise, was the appearance of a number of people who attempted to practise *ijtihad* although they were insufficiently knowledgeable to do so. In Bediuzzaman's view, there were many causes of this inadequacy, some of which were the dominance of Western civilization, materialist philosophy and thought prevailing over peoples' thought and conduct, and various other things bewildering their minds, confusing their hearts, and destroying their aspiration. Such things all prevented a person from attaining the level at which he might practise *ijtihad*. When discussing this matter, Bediuzzaman said:

> "But now, due to [people's] minds and hearts being confused, and their endeavour and aspiration weak, and their being obsessed with politics and philosophy, they are turned with all their capacity towards modern science and the life of this world. There is no correct *ijtihad* that it might be expended on the ordinances of religion."[20]

Everyone may understand from the above that Bediuzzaman was filled with sorrow at the fact that while devoting so much attention to the modern sciences, people had neglected the sciences of the Shari'a and therefore had not reached the level at which they might practise *ijtihad*. The true purpose of the piece is to defend the view that it was necessary to close the door of *ijtihad* before those

19. Şahiner, Necmeddin, *Bilinmeyen Taraflariyle Bediüzzaman Said Nursî*, İstanbul, Yeni Asya Yayınları, 232.
20. *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, 82.

who, since they had absorbed the dominant physical sciences and modern science, were not conversant with the finer points of the sciences of the Shari'a. The door of *ijtihad* might only be opened to those like Bediuzzaman himself who had brought together in themselves both kinds of science, the physical sciences and those of the Shari'a.

Conclusion

We may summarize the causes influential in his writing a work about *ijtihad* as follows:

Firstly: The weakness in adhering to religion that was widespread in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire. It was such that some scholars who attempted *ijtihad* were able to go so far as deeming lawful those things that were prohibited, and vice versa. According to *fiqh*, there is absolutely no circumstance permitting the opening of the door to such people. On the contrary, it could only be shut fast in their faces.

Secondly: The inadequate knowledge of the religious sciences in Bediuzzaman's time in comparison with knowledge of the physical sciences. This arose from those who supported the practice of *ijtihad* being preoccupied with the former and an obsession with it spreading among them like a contagious disease. Afflicting these supporters of *ijtihad* was a pervasive indifference towards the religious sciences. Thus, there was need at such a time for another *ijtihad*, the purpose of which would be to close the door of *ijtihad* for the sake of Islam.

However much Bediuzzaman believed that this door would for ever remain open to anyone who possessed the necessary qualifications, there were barriers obstructing its being open for the people of the present age. These two points lie behind what he wrote concerning this, and are related to the principle involved and the result, and perhaps also the reason.

In short: In my view, the above descriptions of the conditions prevailing when this treatise was written, and their effect are sufficient, and I suggest that anyone wishing for further knowledge should himself study the subject. I pray to God that He will grant me success in these efforts of mine.

B. An analysis of the Treatise On *Ijtihad*

We noted above the factors which were influential in Bediuzzaman's writing his treatise on *ijtihad*, and learnt of the conditions and circumstances affecting it. The duty that falls to us now is to study the work itself in scholarly fashion, for it contains extremely powerful learned truths. What we may say on the subject is as follows:

With a profound knowledge and understanding, Bediuzzaman approached the question taking into consideration certain facts concerning the people of this age, and stated that although the door of *ijtihad* was in fact open, there were six obstacles preventing the practice of it at this time. So long as the conditions obtained, the door of *ijtihad* should remain closed; it was forbidden by the Shari'a to enter it. It is as though Bediuzzaman is quite simply saying in this way that "If *ijtihad* was to be practised as it should be, it would be lawful. But since

the conditions permitting it have changed, it is not to be commended." If we glance at the obstacles he described as the reasons for the unlawfulness of *ijtihad* at this time, we will see that they may be studied under two headings: moral obstacles and scholarly obstacles. So long as these obstacles were not removed, the door should remain closed. For the persistence of the obstacles nullifies the necessary conditions of *ijtihad*. A person who did not complete the deficiences would not gain the right to perform *ijtihad*. Before listing these obstacles clearly and analyzing them according to scholarly principles, it is necessary to consider at least briefly the conditions of performing *ijtihad*. In this way, we shall understand clearly that the *ijtihads* performed by people living in the conditions of Bediuzzaman's time and at this time, are opposed to the Shari'a and not reliable.

It should be pointed out that the definition of the necessary conditions for a person who intends to carry out *ijtihad* is the subject of serious dispute among the scholars of the principles of *fiqh*. If they had been able to agree on these conditions, we, and others studying the subject, would not have met with difficulties in the seas of that dispute. Rather than dwelling on these differences and himself joining in the dispute, Ustad put forward certain views on the conditions of *ijtihad*; these are in respect of their degree and kind, or their continuance and meeting with change. His approach to these conditions differs to the approaches of many other scholars. It is discussed below within the framework of a number of points:

- Some of the conditions put forward for *ijtihad* are agreed upon, and some are controversial. It is not right in this situation for a person to state that the controversial conditions are not binding on people. Nor is it right to leave aside the conditions that are agreed upon and claim that there are no binding conditions for the practise of *ijtihad*.
- Another important point that has to be accepted is that the conditions of *ijtihad* change with time and that they may be developed and modified. It is not possible for all the conditions of *ijtihad* to remain eternally unchanging, despite changes in time and place. For example, it is unthinkable that a person should claim that the conditions of *ijtihad* were the same during the time of the Prophet (PBUH) or the time of the Companions, and in the time of the subsequent two generations. Matters in the books on the principles of *fiqh* dealing with these conditions may be put forward as evidence for this fact. That is to say, at the time of the Companions, knowledge of the Qur'anic verses concerning the injunctions of religion was not considered to be a necessary condition for practising *ijtihad*. So too, knowledge of the principles of *fiqh* was not an accepted necessary condition in either the time of the Companions or that of the subsequent generation. Likewise, we see that knowledge of logic was not one of the conditions sought for *ijtihad* in the period of the second generation following the time of the Prophet (PBUH).

Since the case is thus, the factor of time and place has led to debate on the differing conditions for *ijtihad* every century. That is to say, it would be wrong to think that the conditions of *ijtihad* of the first generations of Islam, and particularly those put forward in response to particular conditions in the course of history, should be perpetuated in fixed, unchanging fashion in the conditions of the present century. Doubtless, the most advanced period from the point of view of the codification and categorization of the sciences, was the fourth Hijri century. For example, the science of logic being included among the sciences of the Shari'a encouraged some scholars of the principles of *fiqh* to count study of this science among the conditions of *ijtihad*. In fact, Ghazali went even further and said that this condition formed the basis of all the conditions of *ijtihad*.

These and other developments are evidences for the acceptance of the modification, development, and increase of the conditions of *ijtihad*. No one doubts that knowledge of the science of the principles of *fiqh* became widespread from the end of the first and [beginning of the] second centuries. However, that science being made a condition of *ijtihad* occurred approximately three centuries later. Most of the conditions of *ijtihad* emerged in the same way.

To summarize, we may say that the conditions of *ijtihad* and particularly one section of them should be considered within a broad perspective, and that new conditions should be introduced according to need each century. For there can be no harm in reconsidering certain controversial conditions with a view to their being modified, perfected, or changed. In any event, such procedures are parts of *ijtihad*. May God grant mercy to the righteous authorities of earlier generations who developed and used the conditions pointed out by those who preceded them, and looking at their own times, offered to the people of their own time certain conditions that had not previously been accepted. Imam Ghazali was one of these standard-bearers. His work *al-Mustaṣfā* shows that he was influenced by the events of his time and defined various conditions of *ijtihad*. Another scholar was Ibn Subki; he put forward conditions opposed to those Ghazali proposed. And Imam al-Shatibi limited these conditions with knowledge of two important sciences. There are many similar examples. As a whole they show clearly that the conditions of *ijtihad* are capable of change, modification, and development.

However, it is a fact that the conditions of *ijtihad* were first deduced by means of *ijtihad*. So no one has the right to ignore the times in which he lives and their conditions when it comes to defining the conditions of *ijtihad*, and to disregard the needs, rules, and mentality of the times. Therefore, a person who attains the level of *ijtihad* this century may also define the conditions for it according to the needs of the time. For example, he may consider to be essential conditions the deduction of rulings from the injunctions of the Qur'an and Sunna, as well as, so that they may be presented in the way most suitable to the mentality of this age, the study of modern social and physical sciences. However, someone who does not fulfil this condition should not be permitted to approach the field of *ijtihad*, since he will be unable to explain the injunctions of the Shari'a in a way that addresses the understanding and mentality of the age.

Another question that demands care and attention when discussing the conditions of *ijtihad* is the necessity of differentiating between two matters: the conditions for the practice of *ijtihad* and conditions for its validity should not be confused with each other.

What we mean by the conditions for the practice of *ijtihad* is sufficient knowledge of the necessary sciences. For example, the chief of these sciences are the sciences of the principles of *fiqh*, Hadith, and philology. It would not be right to consider a person with insufficient knowledge of these sciences to be a *mujtahid*. Those who, despite this, have pretensions to practising *ijtihad* are frauds and liars. The social and physical sciences of the modern age are included in the above-mentioned sciences, because with the enormous influence on contemporary life of the awesome advances in these fields, the need arises for matters to be related in a way the people of the present will understand. This necessitates study of the basic principles of these sciences and a knowledge of their dimensions.

What we mean by the conditions for the validity of *ijtihad* refers to consideration of the sciences related to the tenets of belief and ethics and their principles, on which the acceptability of *ijtihad* is dependent. Whoever reaches the required level in these will have largely fulfilled the conditions of *ijtihad*, and will thus be qualified to practise it. The chief of these is knowledge of the abrogating and abrogated verses of the Qur'an (*nāsikh-mansūkh*), consensus (*ijmā'*), man, the aims of the Shari'a and its true meaning. And to come to the principles of belief and morals, principles like Islam, justice, righteousness, and *taqwa*. If one of these conditions is lacking, the *ijtihad* of such a *mujtahid* is not acceptable. Indeed, it should be rejected and refuted.

On the other hand, a person's fulfilling the conditions of *ijtihad* is not sufficient to make the *ijtihad* he carries out acceptable and capable of being applied. At the same time, the conditions for the *ijtihad* to be valid have to be fulfilled, as indicated above. Furthermore, if any of the relations between the conditions of an *ijtihad* are missing, or any of the conditions for its validity are absent, the *ijtihad* will not be entirely rejected. For example, a *mujtahid* carries out an *ijtihad* without obtaining sufficient knowledge or attaching sufficient importance to it; such an *ijtihad* is to be rejected; it is not acceptable. But such a situation does not disqualify him from practising *ijtihad* altogether. For the incorrectness and non-acceptability of the *ijtihad* stems from lack of information and knowledge.

If there is need in an *ijtihad* to touch on the principles of the tenets of belief and morals, the infringement of any condition effective in the *ijtihad* nullifies the ruling absolutely. For example, even if a non-Muslim fulfils all the other conditions of *ijtihad*, his *ijtihad* is certainly not acceptable. In the same way, so long as a sinner continues his depravity, none of the rulings he makes can be considered to be *ijtihad*. And so on, other examples may be made in the same way.

Having reached this conclusion, we may sum up as follows: sufficient attention should be paid to the subject when discussing the conditions of *ijtihad*. So long as this is not done, it hinders the emergence of old and new conditions in sound form. It was exactly the same in the past. And so it will continue, a sorry state beset by conflicting ideas and the intervention of individual tastes.

After our hasty discussion of the conditions of *ijtihad*, we shall turn to an analysis —in the light of the conditions of the time in which he lived— of a

number of circumstances that Bediuzzaman defined as obstacles to *ijtihad*. We anyway above divided into two the obstacles: those connected with learning, and those connected with morality. A little later we shall see in all its simplicity the place this division has in Bediuzzaman's discussions, but firstly we shall cast an eye at these obstacles, in order to distinguish the differences between them.

***Firstly:* The obstacles to *ijtihad* connected with learning**

Explaining his ideas about the obstacles to *ijtihad* in this age, Bediuzzaman speaks of two important obstacles connected with learning and knowledge. We may examine them as follows:

i. Lack of expertise in the sciences of the Shari'a. (That is, Hadith, *fiqh*, the principles of *fiqh*, philology, etc.)

The reasons for this were the scattering of minds and hearts; endeavour and aspiration being dissipated; philosophy and politics dominating people's thought; and the sciences of the Shari'a being neglected in favour of the physical sciences.

All these were clearly influential in preventing the level of scholarship necessary for *ijtihad* being reached this age. Thus, these and similar reasons formed faults, preventing people attaining the level of *ijtihad*. The problem could be resolved only by the door of *ijtihad* being closed. In this way, evils could not assault Islam, and ideas which were not part of Islam could not be put forward in the name of Islam. After describing the situation of those living in previous centuries, Bediuzzaman goes on to say:

> "At this time, however, due to the domination of European civilization and the supremacy of natural philosophy and the preponderance of the conditions of worldly life, minds and hearts have become scattered, and endeavour and aspiration divided. Minds have become strangers to non-material matters. It is because of this that if someone now was to memorize the Qur'an at the age of four and have the intelligence of a *mujtahid* like Sufyan b. Uyayna, who held discussions with religious scholars at an early age, he would need ten times longer than Sufyan to become qualified to interpret the law. If Sufyan acquired the learning in ten years, this man would need one hundred years. Because the period of Sufyan's natural study began at the age of reason. His disposition and abilities were slowly prepared and illuminated; they took lessons from everything and became like a match. But his counterpart at the present time, since his thought is submerged in philosophy, his mind plunged in politics, and his heart is giddy at the life of this world, his disposition and abilities have grown far away from interpretation of the law (*ijtihad*). They have become removed from interpretation of the Shari'a to the degree they have been preoccupied with the modern sciences, and have remained backward in that respect to the extent he has become learned in the physical sciences. Therefore, he may not say: 'I am as intelligent as him. Why can't I be on a level with him?' He does not have the right to say this, and he cannot be on a level with him."[21]

Here, Bediuzzaman is describing most succinctly the obstacles to the door of *ijtihad* being opened, and gives the reasons for reaching such a conclusion.

21. *Sözler*, 450 / *The Words*, 496-7.

Someone who reads this hastily may think he regards the physical sciences as reprehensible, but that certainly was not the case. In no way did Bediuzzaman look askance at those sciences. The people he opposed were those who although they studied in depth the modern sciences, failed to study the sciences of the Shari'a. They therefore remained ignorant of and uninformed about the latter, despite their being the most important of the conditions of *ijtihad*, making it possible for a person to practise it. If a person studied both in tandem, it is certain Bediuzzaman would have offered no objection. An historian who has written his biography describes this as follows:

> "Numerous debates and discussions took place between him and well-known scholars who had specialized in the modern natural sciences. This led him to conclude that the science of *kalām* (theology) he had studied was insufficient for explaining the truths of belief to the people of this age. For the enemy of the time had to be resisted, and fought with his own weapons of science. Therefore, in order to be able to convey the truths of belief both to those who opposed him and to all humanity, he followed a way based on the natural sciences. Assisted by his brilliant intelligence, he studied numerous sciences like mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, physics, modern philosophy, history, and geography, even reaching a level whereat he could write works on these subjects..."[22]

How true it is that while Ustad was striving to learn so many of the physical sciences, his contemporaries were heedlessly neglecting the sciences of the Shari'a. We see from all this and believe wholeheartedly that it was only a difference of ideas between himself and those who opposed him —due to their distancing themselves from the sciences of the Shari'a and growing apart from them. It is clear that in the face of these people and their weakness and foreignness in this field, how right Bediuzzaman was to oppose the door of *ijtihad* being opened.

ii. The second obstacle connected with learning: the absence of knowledge about the science of the principles of *fiqh* (*'ilm al-uṣūl*).

Through Divine grace, Bediuzzaman memorized in a mere week the work called *Jam' al-Jawāmi'* by Subkī and his son, which is accepted to be the most comprehensive work in the field of the principles of *fiqh*. This shows us just how proficient he was in that field and also just how deficient some others are. The supporters of *ijtihad* and those who want to open its door should therefore understand their impotence and weakness, and admit that their contributions to this field are not acceptable. One day while teaching about the conditions of *ijtihad*, Shawkani said the following about this science:

> "... The science of the principles of *fiqh* must be learnt thoroughly. no effort should be spared to acquire knowledge of it in all its dimensions. This science is undoubtedly the mainstay of the procedure of *ijtihad*, the foundation and supporting pillar of its edifice. In both matters a person should keep in view a point that will take him to the truth. So long as he does this, he may most easily transform secondary matters into primary principles. If a person is deficient in this science, however, he will not be able to do this, and will fall into error in the rulings he reaches."[23]

22. *Badī'u'z-Zamān Sa'īd al-Nūrsī, Naẓara 'Āmma 'an Ḥayātihi wa Āthārihi*, 22.
23. Shawkānī, *Irshād al-Fuḥūl*, ii, 301.

Imam al-Razi stated that the science of the principles of *fiqh* is the most important of the sciences *mujtahids* have to learn.[24] Thus, Bediuzzaman understood this important weakness in the people of today, and it compelled him to prevent the door of *ijtihad* remaining open, to close it on them and prevent them entering it. With the aim of showing up the weakness of these people in the above-mentioned science, he listed three points testifying to this:

> "Three points of view make interpretation of the law (*ijtihad*) earthly at this time, and make it cease being heavenly. Whereas the Shari'a is heavenly, revealed, and since they make known its hidden ordinances, interpretations of the Shari'a also are heavenly.
>
> "***The First:*** The wisdom or purpose of an ordinance is one thing, while the reason (Ar. *'illa*; Turk. *illet*) for it is something different. Wisdom and benefit are the cause of its choice, not the means of its being necessitated and created. And the reason is the means for its existence. For example, the obligatory prayers are shortened while travelling; two *rak'ats* are performed. The reason for this permission of the Shari'a is the journey, while its wisdom is the hardship. If there is the journey and no hardship, the prayers are still shortened. For there is the reason. But if there is no journey and still hardship, it may not be the reason for shortening the prayers. Thus, contrary to this fact, the view at this time sets up the benefit and wisdom in place of the reason, and makes its judgement in accordance with that. Such an interpretation is certainly earthly, not heavenly.
>
> "***The Second:*** The view at the present time looks primarily to worldly happiness, whereas the view of the Shari'a looks primarily to happiness in the hereafter, and to happiness in this world in second place and indirectly as the means to the hereafter. That is to say, the view of this time is a stranger to the spirit of the Shari'a; in which case, it may not make interpretations in its name.
>
> "***The Third:*** There is a rule: *Necessity makes permissible what is forbidden.* This rule is not universal.[25] So long as it is not by way of what is forbidden, necessity causes what is forbidden to be licit. But if something has become a necessity due to abuse and for illicit reasons, it may not the means to ordinances permitting it, and may not form an excuse..."[26]

These three points show that a person not possessing these characteristics lacks knowledge of the science of the principles of *fiqh*. The first point shows that an ordinary person would not have sufficient knowledge of the question of 'causes' (*'illa*—here translated as 'reason') in analogies (*qiyās*). The second shows he has not grasped the subtleties of the aims and purposes of the Shari'a, its mysteries, and the question of 'benefits' (*maṣlaḥa*) in the science of the principles of *fiqh*. As for the third point, it states that profound comprehension of the clear rulings of the Shari'a which according to most of the scholars of the principles of *fiqh* are connected with the questions of 'dispensations' (*rukhṣa*) and 'resolution' (*'azīma*). A person who has not been occupied to the utmost in studying and endeavouring to understand these points and has not had the opportu-

24. al-Rāzī, *al-Maḥṣūl*, ii, 36.
25. I am of the opinion that the word 'absolute' (*muṭlaq*) would be more appropriate here than 'universal' (*kullī*).
26. *Sözler*, 451 / *The Words*, 497-8.

nity master them, because of this deficiency in his knowledge, may not attempt *ijtihad*. Thus, these are the truths that Bediuzzaman discovered, who most definitely did not look tolerantly on such people attempting *ijtihad*.

We have thus finally come to the end of the obstacles connected with learning that drove Imam Bediuzzaman to write this study of the closure of the door of *ijtihad* in the face of some of its supporters this century. We saw how apposite a view Bediuzzaman expressed in this matter and particularly how some of the agreed conditions for the practice of *ijtihad*, like knowledge of the sciences of the principles of *fiqh*, philology, and Hadith, might change. Now the turn has come to consider the other obstacles connected with the conditions for the validity of *ijtihad*. I beseech God that He will grant me success in presenting these facts and make my words true. In truth, His power suffices all things.

***Secondly:* The obstacles to *ijtihad* connected with general knowledge and morality**

If the remaining obstacles that Bediuzzaman mentioned are studied thoughtfully, it will be understood that they are connected to general knowledge and morality. That is, some of them are connected with knowledge, and some with morality. Below is a study of these.

i. The decline of general knowledge (*'ilm al-ḥāl*), which is one of the conditions for the validity of *ijtihad*.

An *ijtihad* which does not conform to the realities of life and which ignores the reasons for them is in no way acceptable. For a *mujtahid* to perform an *ijtihad* without knowing the event concerning which the injunction of the Shari'a was revealed, necessitates that the *ijtihad* in question is rejected. So long as the conditions for its realization are not fulfilled, this field may not be approached. And so long as they are not fulfilled, any *ijtihad* is to be rejected. Because of the importance of this condition, Bediuzzaman said with the aim of preventing the efforts of certain supporters of *ijtihad* to open the door of *ijtihad*, that most of them had not grasped the reality of the circumstances of the time. Instead of directing their attention to theoretical *ijtihad*, which had been put forward by the authorities of earlier times and which in Bediuzzaman's view was far from being able to answer the needs of the time and place, they should expend their endeavour on acquiring general knowledge and establishing and reviving the essentials of religion.

The duty, therefore, that fell to all scholars qualified to practise *ijtihad* was to perform a practical *jihad* to establish the essentials of religion. In Bediuzzaman's view, this duty should be in no way neglected, except by those who truly were not qualified to practise *ijtihad*. He says concerning this:

> "Independent judgements may not be made about the essential teachings of religion, for they are specified and definite. Moreover, they are like basic food and sustenance. Although at this time all effort and endeavour should be expended to uphold them and raise them to life, they are being abandoned and degraded. So to give them up, despite their being among the theoretical matters of Islam and due to being the pure and disinterested interpretations of the first generations of Islam are not inadequate for the needs of all times, and to make new interpretations of the law in arbitrary fashion, is an innovation and betrayal of Islam."[27]

In another place he says by way of proof of the *mujtahids* of the present lacking general knowledge (*'ilm al-ḥāl*):

> "In winter when the storms are fierce even small holes are blocked up, and it is in no way reasonable to open up new doors. And under the onslaught of a mighty flood, to make openings in the wall in order to repair it leads to being drowned. In just the same way, at this time of denial and the assault of the customs of Europe and the legion of innovations and the destruction of misguidance, to open up new doors in the citadel of Islam in the name of *ijtihad*, and make openings that will be the means of those bent on destruction scaling the walls and entering it, is a crime against Islam."[28]

After discussing the fulfilment of the conditions for the realization or practice of *ijtihad*, we have now discussed general knowledge (*'ilm al-ḥāl*) as one of the conditions of its validity. Doubtless, with his penetrating view, Bediuzzaman observed that even if some of the supporters of *ijtihad* of the time reached the level of practising *ijtihad*, all such *ijtihads* would be invalid and not in accordance with the revealed Shari'a. Because for the ruling a person carrying out *ijtihad* arrived at to be acceptable and in accordance with the Shari'a, he had to be informed about current circumstances.

ii. Decline in the condition of justice and piety

In connection with this obstacle too, Bediuzzaman emphasized the need for the door of *ijtihad* to be closed on its supporters. So too he discussed the obstacles connected with morality as a cause distancing the *'ulama* of the present from *ijtihad*. The *ijtihad* of a person who takes this obstacle into consideration at such a time, would make it acceptable. Bediuzzaman's eloquent words are as follows:

> "Just as within a body is the inclination to expand, for its growth and development. And, since it is from within, the inclination to expand is a being perfected for the body. Whereas if it is an inclination for expansion from outside it, it is to rip the body's skin; to destroy it; it is not expansion. In the same way, when the inclination to expand and will to interpret the law (*ijtihad*) were present in those who had entered the domain of Islam through the door of perfect *taqwa* and the way of conforming to Islam's essential teachings like the authorities of the early generations, that was a perfection and a being perfected. But if such an inclination and desire come from those who give up the essentials, prefer the life of this world to that of the hereafter, and are tainted with materialist philosophy, it is the means of destroying the body of Islam and casting off the chain of the Shari'a from the neck."[29]

Imam Bediuzzaman also states that those who support *ijtihad* although they do not fulfil this condition are not qualified in this respect. For they are deficient in *taqwa* and piety. The door of *ijtihad* is not closed before those who fulfil this condition in addition to the others. For Bediuzzaman to state otherwise is unthinkable. As is indicated in the other sections, on the contrary, he encourages such people to practise *ijtihad*.

27. *Sözler*, 449-50 / *The Words*, 495-6.
28. *Sözler*, 495 / *The Words*, 495.
29. *Sözler*, 451 / *The Words*, 497.

iii. The possibility of not avoiding falsehood

Bediuzzaman mentions a further reason for the door of *ijtihad* being closed, besides those ennumerated above, and this is the disappearance of justice (truthfulness), the widespread lack of integrity (lying), or the people of this time not truly avoiding falsehood. On the distance increasing between the centuries of light and reality of the Companions of the Prophet (PBUH), those that came after them, and the generation subsequent to that, this obstacle became greater. For at that time it was wonderfully easy to reach the spring of light and reality. The difference between truth and falsehood was extremely clear and well-defined.

> "However, since that time the distance between truthfulness and lying has gradually diminished, until they have become shoulder to shoulder. Having begun to be sold together in the same shop, social morality has become corrupted."[30]

Imam Bediuzzaman listed in this way the obstacles closing the door of *ijtihad* before those who supported its opening at this time. We have seen some of the obstacles related to the *mujtahids* of the present, which have resulted in the non-fulfilment of the conditions for the practice and validity of *ijtihad*. We may say comfortably that Bediuzzaman did not leave these views in mid-air. He expended all his energy and endeavour to prevent those who did not fulfil the conditions storming the gates of *ijtihad*, insisting that such an act would be injurious, and to reach an authentic ruling on the Shari'a. In addition, he rejected any *ijtihad* that had been performed by someone who, although he fulfilled the conditions for the practice of *ijtihad*, infringed some of those connected with its validity.

Thus, we have come to the end of the matters preventing *ijtihad* in the time of Bediuzzaman. We beseech God that He will grant me success with this analysis, allowing me to reach the desired results with this study of the obstacles to *ijtihad*. Our hope is for integrity in our views, and success in our discussions...

C. A Critique of Bediuzzaman's Treatise On *Ijtihad*

• The person reading the Treatise On *Ijtihad* should concentrate his attention while looking at what is written here, on the 'correctness' (*iṣāba*) to be noted in most of aims of the writing of this treatise. He should also be aware of Bediuzzaman's intense desire to protect Islam, and of the power and strength of his knowledge, which he assigned solely to the service of Islam, and his endeavour to defend Islam with it, and the self-sacrifice he displayed in refuting the ideas that caused people to become sceptical and led them into misguidance. The Treatise On *Ijtihad* is a tiny drop from a vast ocean. Its purpose of serving the religion of Islam is the best witness to what we claim here.

• This fact also shows that none of his contemporaries surpassed him in respect of general knowledge (*'ilm al-ḥāl*). In addition, it is not possible for most of the scholars of our time to reach his level of comprehension. For most of these persons plumb the depths of the World of Similitudes but are uninformed

30. *Sözler*, 459 / *The Words*, 506.

about the reality of things. Scholars of former times quoted the following rule: "It cannot be denied that the ordinances [of religion] change with changes in time and place, and customs and practices." Such a conclusion was reached through noting in regard to establishing and applying the Lawgiver's (that is, God's) intention in His commands and prohibitions, the events that were the cause of the revelation of the injunctions of the Qur'an and Sunna. Throughout the history of Islam, the reason for all the upheavals and disturbances with which Islam has been faced has been lack of knowledge about effective conditions, both negative and affirmative, that is, people not knowing the reality of the situation in which they lived. Furthermore, most of those who have practised *ijtihad* and supported the practice of it have demonstrated the same neglect and deficiency. In the same way, those who have supported the re-opening of the door of *ijtihad*, which goes together with the Islamic cause, have always foreseen dispelling in this way the negative results that the above-mentioned deficiency has given rise to.

Anyone who studies closely the period in which Bediuzzaman lived will see this clearly. Because *ijtihad* in that period was of great importance both in regard to theoretical *ijtihad* and the ability to carry out the procedures, having referred to the rulings reached by means of *ijtihad* by the authorities of the early generations of Islam —if necessary completing, modifying, or abrogating these; and in regard to applied *ijtihad*, which requires great exertion in order to understand the Divine intention in the injunctions of the Qur'an and Sunna. That is, the question of need has to be approached with great care and attention. For this reason, a person has to sincerely agree with his view; what Bediuzzaman Said Nursi said in connection with *ijtihad*, on which the Islamic cause is founded, and his assertion that the door of theoretical *ijtihad* was closed, and the door of applied and practical *ijtihad* was open, were absolutely correct and to the point.

In particular, lying behind their *ijtihad* were reasons of great significance, due to which most of the *mujtahids* of this time were not qualified to practice theoretical *ijtihad*. An all-pervasive laziness, indifference, and aimlessness had settled in the body of the Umma and was circulating in its blood and veins. In such a situation, the thing the Umma was in most need of was applied *ijtihad*, rather than theoretical *ijtihad*. For it had become enfeebled in the face of the enemy's attacks, and had suffered defeat due to various individuals who had imposed their rule over it down the centuries. Thus, the need was for firm foundations on which to re-establish its own civilization, and for it to embrace these foundations with all its strength. All these are the facts lying behind Imam Bediuzzaman's *ijtihad*.

• On the other hand, someone with a different approach might say about Bediuzzaman that it might have been more appropriate for him to offer firm guidance about theoretical *ijtihad* rather than recommending the closing of the doors of *ijtihad*. For at least some of the *ijtihad*s that have come down to us from the authorities of the early generations should not be considered to be articles of some sacred religion. Especially those carried out under the influence, direct or

indirect, of the conditions, customs and practices of their times. The door of *ijtihad* should be opened in order to make those *ijtihads* conform harmoniously to the conditions and customs of Bediuzzaman's time. It was meaningless to disregard the role time and place had played in the formation of previous *ijtihad*s, and to try to apply them to the present. In addition, Bediuzzaman's statements about the closure of the door of theoretical *ijtihad* contradicts what he said about needing to expend all effort to re-establish and renew the essentials of religion.[31]

In reply we might say: The majority of the theoretical *ijtihad*s that have come down to us from the authorities of the early generations present no difficulty today from the point of view of the author of the treatise we are studying. To a great extent they conform to the conditions of the present and will continue to do so in the future. The basic and supreme problem is choosing which of these *ijtihad*s is preferable this age, or according to which of them one should act. On advancing and progressing in civilization after its backwardness, will the Umma persist, for example, with Imam Shafi'i's *ijtihad* of both the imam and the congregation reciting the *Fatiha* in the five daily prayers? Do the changes of time and place and conditions necessitate any change in this *ijtihad*, and others like it, which were put forward affected by conditions, time and place, or do they not necessitate it?

It cannot be expected for all these to be found theoretically in the *ijtihad*s of the authorities of the early generations of Islam. Such *ijtihads* never considered conditions, customs, and times and places which they would never experience. Their rule, quoted above, throws light on this question: "The change of the injunctions (what is meant here are the injunctions based on theoretical *ijtihad*) with changes in time and place, and customs and practices, cannot be denied." If they had not been powerless to take the events and circumstances of the future into consideration when making an *ijtihad*, they would not have put any such rule. Therefore, and God knows best, one has to look for another explanation of why Bediuzzaman stated absolutely that there was no need for new *ijtihads* and that the *ijtihads* of the previous authorities had to be sufficed with. General knowledge in particular necessitates knowledge of the past in respect to theory, so that this knowledge may be applied to the events of the present. Who would not want to be successful in applying theory and *ijtihad* to inappropriate events or circumstances? How can the Divine intention be ascertained concerning any event, if there is no connection between the characteristics of the past and those of the present?

Moreover, did Bediuzzaman himself not say in various places in the Risale-i Nur that one qualified and capable of *ijtihad* —all those fulfilling the conditions of *ijtihad*— may practise it?

• Furthermore, it may be seen that Imam Bediuzzaman did not offer any solution deduced from principles put forward by the authorities of the early period to which one might adhere in the face of the circumstances and needs of this new age. So what might be done to meet these new needs that have emerged in various ways? Does it necessitate the Umma being uninformed of the injunctions of the Shari'a in this field? Or does it necessitate contemporary *ijtihad*s which will derive appropriate injunctions?

31. *Sözler*, 449 / *The Words*, 495.

Bediuzzaman did not give any guidelines for solving this problem. So this necessitates that the absolute view concerning the door of theoretical *ijtihad* being closed should be reviewed and be made subject to criticism. Because abandoning theoretical *ijtihad* will prevent any solution being found to the problems of the present and result in unconditional surrender to them. Moreover, new advances and circumstances have created a great need for incontrovertible theoretical *ijtihad*, so that through it they may be accepted wholly or be modified or completed in a way suitable to the spirit and elevated aims of the Shari'a.

As its boundaries expanded Islam witnessed numerous defeats, rebellions, and dissensions. If the Islamic Umma had not been bound in its conduct to the theoretical and applied *ijtihad*s put forward by the authorities of the early generations, sufficing with earlier *ijtihad*s although they did not conform to their needs, perhaps they would not have met with many of those circumstances. Therefore, in order to find solutions for the new problems with which it is faced as time passes and the centuries change, the Umma is in need of carrying out new *ijtihad*s or of redefining the *ijtihad*s of former authorities suitably to this century. In this way a multi-faceted instance of good will be realized. The problems will be defined and solved in the light of reason, in a way related to the past, the present, and the future.

We may conclude this discussion with the following point: the view Bediuzzaman Said Nursi put forward concerning the closure of the door of theoretical *ijtihad* at this time with the aim of preventing certain pseudo-scholars causing harm to Islam, was not a new view. For more than ten centuries, the closure of the door of *ijtihad* has been a frequent topic of discussion. Such debates have sometimes grown vehement, and sometimes subsided. We may say that most of them were born of a good intention and had the aim of preventing the attempts of certain ill-intentioned people and foreign cultures to create misinterpretations of this religion, transform its incontestable matters into ambiguous ones, and confuse its incontrovertible ordinances with its conjectural ones. Generally the primary aim of those putting forward these views was to halt misguided currents of thought aimed at corrupting Islam. Those who support the closure of the door of theoretical *ijtihad* in particular are discomforted by the clear cries rising for it to be opened.

According to this second group, the doors of *ijtihad* should be opened to anyone who fulfils the conditions of *ijtihad*, and they should not be prevented. Even if among those who fulfil the conditions are some who do not attain the level of *ijtihad*, either by a small or great degree, the door of *ijtihad* still should not be closed. The difference between those defending these two ideas may cause harm to both sides. For example, it is to be observed that in the face of those who support the closure of the door of *ijtihad*, all the efforts of those who support its opening are not directed towards positive activity to achieve what they support,

but that they limit their activities to persuading those they oppose of their own views.

Anyone who studies the subject closely will see that the Umma needs first and foremost to give up debate as to whether the door of *ijtihad* should be opened or closed. It is necessary at this time to go beyond such disputes. Two ways should be accepted in the field of theoretical *ijtihad* so as to give fresh direction to the world, afflicted as it is with hopelessness and pessimism, and to lead it, and to save humanity from misery:

The First is historical *ijtihad*.

This comprises "choosing in preference to the others one of the views reflected in *fatwas* and judicial decisions (*qaḍā'*) which are recorded in our extensive *fiqh* literature..."[32] The choice should be defined taking into consideration contemporary realities, modern advances, and social, political, and economic change, and the view chosen should be accepted to be the view most suitable to this century and most beneficial to humanity.

The Second is constructive (*inshā'ī*) and creative (*ibdā'ī*) *ijtihad*.

This means "making new rulings about matters that no scholars, past or present, have dealt with."[33] The duty incumbent on the Umma is to make this *ijtihad* widespread and to include new matters that in this age in particular are topical like economic, medical, and political matters, which the authorities of the early generations did not touch on. The same situation applied to them; they based their *ijtihads* on matters, taking into consideration the customs, pratices, and conditions of their own times. In the view of the present writer, the opening or closing of the door of *ijtihad* does not hold all that much importance. For on its own, *ijtihad* may produce solutions to save this disaster-afflicted Umma from backwardness, ignorance, and distress. Such a situation would allow it to regain its lost pride and dignity. To repeatedly make the opening of the door of *ijtihad* the topic of discussion and hold conferences and meetings on it will not assist the Umma to solve any of its difficulties, nor give it the strength to cure its wounds. Essentially what is needed is to put forward practical rules on the subject of general knowledge (*'ilm al-ḥāl*), and to rise above the verbal disputes between supporters and opponents of the question.

Human life is in a state of constant development and progress. It is impossible for those who take part in such fruitless debates to halt these developments. On the contrary, the Umma will continue to be exposed to new events and circumstances. To close one's eyes to these and ignore them is no solution. The Umma has to be delivered from the backwardness with which it has been afflicted for centuries, and from the division into which it has fallen at the hands of marauders coming from north, south, east, and west.

Thus, we have reached the end of our criticism and analysis of the Treatise On *Ijtihad*. The remaining part of this paper contains the conclusions of the study and our proposals.

32. al-Qardāwī, Yūsuf, *al-Ijtihād fi'l-Sharī'a*, Kuwait 1985, 126.
33. *al-Ijtihād fi'l-Sharī'a*, 114.

D. The Conclusions of the Study and Proposals

1. The conclusions of the study

i) We saw during this study of the questions with which Bediuzzaman was concerned in connection with *ijtihad* that his approach was affected by the century in which he lived. Noting the lessening of adherence to Islam, his preference was that the door of theoretical *ijtihad* should be closed rather than opened. The basic deficiency necessitated that persons who were remote from the highway of the Shari'a should be prevented from opening this door, even if they fulfilled the conditions for *ijtihad*. For such people do not in fact believe fully in this religion and they are not sincere in their intentions. If we look from the point of view of lack of knowledge, most of those supporting the practice of *ijtihad* in Bediuzzaman's time should not have approached the matter, even if they fulfilled the conditions for its realization. In Imam Bediuzzaman's view, the weakness stemmed from many people turning away from the sciences of the Shari'a this century in favour of the physical sciences. Such a situation had led to neglect of the sciences of the Shari'a and absorption in the natural sciences. This in turn had necessitated that the door of *ijtihad* be closed to people of this sort, and that they should not be allowed to approach it until they had achieved a balance between the two sciences.

ii) Another important point Bediuzzaman made was the fact that the *ijtihad*s carried out by former scholars encompassed all the theoretical aspects of Islam. There is an important excuse for holding such a conviction. However, many other places in his works confirm that he had no objections to *ijtihad* related to theoretical matters. In addition, he says in one work: "...their being among the theoretical matters of Islam and since, being the pure and disinterpretations interpretations of the first generations of Islam, are not inadequate for the needs of all times, to make new interpretations of the Law in arbitrary fashion, is an innovation and betrayal of Islam."[34] That is, taking into consideration the *ijtihad*s of the authorities of the early generations of Islam, Bediuzzaman sees obstacles to carrying out 'preferential,' 'creative,' or 'constructive' *ijtihad*s. The stage at which the Islamic Umma was found prompted Bediuzzaman to form the opinion that the two sorts of theoretical *ijtihad* should not be pursued.

iii) Bediuzzaman's views concerning the closure of the door of *ijtihad* at this time, and the views put forward throughout the history of Islam should not be confused with one other. As we stated above, however close Bediuzzaman's view appears to be to the views of his predecessors, it was in fact directed to limiting *ijtihad* rather than preventing it entirely. However, in the 5th and 6th centuries of the Hijra in particular, due to the pressures of *taqlid*, the majority of the *'ulama* took the path of forbidding it completely. Some of them even went so far as to claim that God made men powerless to perform the procedure of *ijtihad*. A clear example of this is the Damascus scholar Ibn Abu'l-Dam, who said: "Despite the codification of works by the *'ulama* of our time in the fields of

34. *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, 82.

Qur'anic commentary (*tafsīr*), Hadith, the principles of *fiqh* (*uṣūl*), and secondary matters (*furū'*), which are enough to fill the earth, there is no *mujtahid* in the absolute sense of the word. Neither is there a *mujtahid* who is bound to a school of law of one of the Imams whose views are binding for that school. This is a sign that the end is nigh and that God has made His creatures impotent in the matter of *ijtihad*. It is one of the signs of the end of the world..."[35]

Under the effects of *taqlid*, an imam of the level of al-Rafi'i was able to say: "It is as though a consensus has been formed among the people that now in our day there will be no *mujtahids*."[36]

Since these and others like them had not been saved from *taqlid* in their actions, they hotly defended such views. In Bediuzzaman however, there is no trace of the idea of *taqlid*. On the contrary, he attained the level of *ijtihad*, and put forward his views from that position. Thus, he listed the obstacles to *ijtihad* at the end of his treatise. It was as though he was saying that so long as these obstacles obtained water, had to be made to flow down its channel. This recalls the rule accepted by the *'ulama* of *uṣūl* which refers to something being forbidden, although there is permission for it.[37] Whether theoretical or practical, *ijtihad* is essentially lawful. But due to particular circumstances, such a way may be harmful. If these conditions cease one day, its lawfulness will permit it to return in a new form. Doubtless the change and disappearance of these conditions is not a matter of great difficulty. Conditions for the validity of *ijtihad* like *taqwa*, piety, and justice are of this sort in particular. And acquiring knowledge of the science of the principles of *fiqh* is another condition which is not difficult. When a person is thoroughly equipped with these sciences, a greater part of the conditions for the validity of *ijtihad* will be met.

iv) As someone who in my opinion attained the level of *ijtihad*, it is noteworthy that Bediuzzaman did not choose to expound matters according to the methodology (*uṣūlī*) [of the science of *fiqh*] despite his gaining fame for his extensive knowledge of the modern sciences and of the Shari'i sciences —principally *'ilm al-kalām* and *tafsīr*. Although he himself made no such claim about himself, his works show that his knowledge in this branch [that is, *'ilm al-uṣūl*] was sufficient. In my opinion, his knowledge in this field was not less than in the fields for which he was more famous. I reckon a certain time is necessary in order to summarize his different views in this field, connected with his choice of a view of *ijtihad* or his putting forward new views about the principles of *fiqh*. His memorizing in one week the tome *Jam' al-Jawāmi'* by Subki and his son, is the strongest proof of my claim. For this work, with its categorization, arrangement, chapters, style, and choice, is a veritable encyclopaedia of the principles of *fiqh*.

This then comprises a very brief description of a part of the conclusions I have been able to reach concerning Bediuzzaman's Treatise On *Ijtihad*. For to reach all possible conclusions is beyond my power. If attention is paid to some

35. *al-Ijtihād fi'l-Sharī'a*, 94 (paraphrased).
36. *al-Ijtihād fi'l-Sharī'a*, 93.
37. 'Abd al-Qādir b. Badrān, *al-Madkhal ilā Madhhab al-Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, Cairo, 69.

of the conclusions made in previous sections, the subject will lose none of its importance, despite our haste here. We seek success and rectitude from God.

2. Proposals connected with the subject

I may list my proposals as follows:

• Bediuzzaman's views on methodology (*uṣūlī*), that is, the principles of *fiqh*, should be compiled as soon as possible and studies should be made of the subject. The related pieces found dispersed throughout his works should be collected together in one work. Such a work would have a scholarly place among Islamic books, and at the same time reveal a further hidden aspect of Bediuzzaman's life.

• Paying no attention to the arguments pursued by scholars all over the world about the door of *ijtihad* being either open or closed, preferential (*tarjīḥī*) *ijtihad* should be swiftly embarked upon in the matters the solutions for which were put forward by the authorities of the early generations of Islam. To do so would lead, not to the stultifying of Islamic culture, but to true *ijtihad* and service. Enough now are the many conflicts, differences, and disputes about the various views of *ijtihad* that have afflicted the Umma. The duty that now falls to our scholars is to expend their scholarly efforts and thought on finding solutions to the crisis of ideas afflicting the Umma, particularly in applying certain matters which do not require reference to the *ijtihad*s of the previous authorities in respect of differences in custom, time, place, and conditions, and which have been called 'constructive' (*inshā'ī*) and 'creative' (*ibdā'ī*) *ijtihad*.

Nevertheless, new forms of *ijtihad*s that will solve the problems and answer the needs of our age have to be developed, to save humanity floundering in misery and desperation. So long as the *'ulama* do not perceive this responsibility towards their religion and the Umma, there is no possibility of a speedy deliverance from the crisis. Our hope is that this voice will reach the ears of the scholars.

• The disputes and debates over the opening and closing of the door of *ijtihad* should be brought swiftly to an end. Our proposal here is that the universities, educational establishments, academic centres, and learned institutes of the Islamic world should open a department or branch dealing with this field. That is, the sciences that a person has to study in order to qualify as a *mujtahid* have to be brought together and mastered. Doubtless, all the sciences necessary for *ijtihad* are acquired sciences. It is possible for a person to acquire them through instruction, study, and research. Would it not be desirable for branches or departments to be opened in institutions of learning and for those who graduate in all the sciences necessary for *ijtihad* to be known as *mujtahids*? Every year scholars of Hadith, *tafsīr*, philology, *fiqh*, and *uṣūl* are graduating from numerous departments and faculties in universities and institutions, who will serve the Muslim Umma. What obstacles are there to qualified *mujtahids* graduating from these universities and institutes having learnt thoroughly the necessary sciences and procedures?

In my view, those who say that *ijtihad* is one of the subjects of the science of the principles of *fiqh* (*'ilm al-uṣūl*) are mistaken. For this science is truly independent with principles and subjects particular to itself. That is, if the aim is *ijtihad*, *'ilm al-uṣūl* may be a component of it. So can *ijtihad* be a part of *'ilm al-uṣūl*? Anyone with close interest in this matter, can find innumerable books confirming what I say. That is, one of the conditions of *ijtihad* is knowledge of the science of the principles of *fiqh*. If *ijtihad* had been a section of this science, how could knowledge of it have been put forward as a condition? Is this not a contradiction and exaggeration?

Since it is thus, in my opinion, the science of *ijtihad* is an independent science. It is not a section sheltering under the banner of *'ilm al-uṣūl*. But what is distressing and is a crime against this science is the proposal to leave it where it is. Is there not a place of recourse, a saviour, something that will reply to the Muslim Umma's wish and expectations concerning *ijtihad*?

My aim in preparing this paper was to find answers to these proposals. My prayer to God is that He will employ all of us in the service of Islam and Muslims.

As I approach the end of my paper, I am here in the Masjid al-Nabawi where I have been throughout the season of the Hajj. Here I have found the opportunity to read and study Bediuzzaman's Treatise On *Ijtihad*, and now I have completed my discussion on his approach to the question. I want to say that I have read this treatise of Bediuzzaman's, and the story of his life, over and over again. I always wanted to know Bediuzzaman's views on the question of *ijtihad*, but due to lack of time, my numerous duties and burdensome responsibilities, I could not concern myself with it as I wished.

Finally, I certainly cannot claim to have reached my chief goal, I anyway have no right to make such a claim. Within its limits, this paper is an analysis and study of Imam Bediuzzaman's ideas and the treatise he wrote. I beseech God that He will not leave fruitless these efforts of mine, and that He will grant me success. May He bestow mercy on Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, and make good our end and that of the Islamic world.

Al-salāmu 'alaykum wa raḥmatullāhi wa barakātuhu

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The Mahdi Question According to Bediuzzaman Said Nursi

Zeki Sarıtoprak

Introduction

The famous Muslim historian and sociologist Ibn Khaldun said: "To be anxious about the future is one of the characteristics of human nature," and that it was natural for man to wonder how much longer the world would exist and try to find out.[1] People have always searched for a 'saviour' in difficult and distressing times. Sometimes an unknown person has been looked upon as saviour, and sometimes a leader, or a learned man. In this way, men have forgotten their troubles, if only a little, and found solace.

The expectation of a 'saviour' is not only to be found in Judaism and Christianity, but in just about all religions and cultures, and is a belief, hope, and ideal of deliverance shared by all humanity. In Islamic belief too there is a concept of a 'saviour,' which attracts our attention through his different names. Names such as *Imam*,[2] *Mujaddid*,[3] *Khalifa*,[4] and *Mahdi*[5] have been given this person —or

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1. Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, Cairo, 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Wafī 1981, ii, 821.
2. Bukhārī, Abū 'Abdillāh Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl, *al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, Beirut n.d., al-Anbiyā', 49.
3. Abū Dā'ūd, Sulaymān b. al-Ash'ath al-Sijistānī, *Sunan Abī Dā'ūd*, Beirut, Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥamīd n.d., al-Malāḥim, 1.

unknown saviour— who is to save society from oppression and establish justice, his most important characteristic. Their roles are the same, but their persons are different. According to this belief, the Mahdi whom the Shi'a await will clash at the end of time with the Sufyan, whom the Umayyads expected. The shared aspect of all these concepts is that a person will appear at the end of time who will possess spiritual power and lead a reform movement. Here, of these names whose persons are different but functions the same, we shall discuss the Mahdi question, and attempt to define Bediuzzaman's view of the matter.

1. Etymology

The dictionary meaning of 'mahdi' is someone who is on the straight path or who has attained to guidance. *Mahdi* is someone to whom God has communicated the truth.[6] In this respect, all Muslims who are on the right path may be called *mahdi*. However, if preceded by the definite article 'al', it becomes a particular title, used for the person whom God's Messenger (PBUH) foretold would come at the end of time. As is understood from narrations, this person will appear at a time oppression and injustice are rife, and fill the face of the earth with justice. In its plural form *mahdiyyūn*, it was used for the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs and those who followed their way. The possible reason for the person who is to come at the end of time being called the Mahdi may be a Hadith narrated from 'Ali b. Abi Talib. This narration says that in one night Almighty God will impart guidance in the full meaning to the Mahdi.[7] The Mahdi's guidance will be God-given (*vehbi*), and he will receive it through special grace.[8]

The statement of some interpreters that the word has been misused, and that originally it was in the form of the active participle, *muhdī* (giving guidance, showing the way), is without basis.[9]

The Hanbali scholar al-Safarini (d. 1188/1774) gave a subjective explanation for the Mahdi being given this name. He said the Mahdi had attained to guidance through some hidden knowledge. He had retreated to a mountain in Syria. When the time comes he will publish from there the true Torah and Gospels, silence the Jews and Christians with them, and through them a community of Christians will become Muslim.[10]

4. Muslim, Abu'l-Ḥusayn b. Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī, *al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, Cairo 1374/1974, al-Fitan, 67-9.
5. *Abū Dā'ūd*, al-Mahdī, 1.
6. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, art. h-d-y.
7. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, Cairo 1313, i, 84.
8. Ḥajjāj, 'Abdullāh, *'Alāmāt al-Qiyāmat al-Kubrā*, Cairo 1986, 73.
9. See, Macdonald, D. B., "Mahdi," İA, vii, 474; Goldziher says that in our times the word 'Mahdi' has been used for those who are 'muhtadi,' that is, have entered Islam from another religion, and as evidence for this points out two persons called 'Mahdi' who were originally Copts and then became Muslim and were later appointed Shaykh of al-Azhar, one 1812-1815, and the other 1870-1890. For there are numerous worthy persons in the various departments of al-Azhar, called Mahdi, who are Muslim. For the Shaykhs of al-Azhar and their names, see, *al-Azhar, Ta'rikhuhu wa Taṭawwuruhu*, Cairo 1403/1983, 161-4.
10. al-Safārīnī, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ḥanbalī, *Lawāmi' al-Anwār al-Bahiyya*, Cairo 1323, ii, 72.

II. The Mahdi concept in history

In history, Abraham (PUH), the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs, Husayn, Sulayman b. 'Abd al-Malik, Hisham b. 'Abd al-Malik, and some of the 'Abbasid Caliphs were called the Mahdi. 'Ali b. Abi Talib in particular was called both Hadi and Mahdi.[11] Those who called 'Umar b. al-'Aziz the Mahdi also attributed some Hadiths to him.[12] God's Messenger (PBUH) himself used the terms 'the Mahdis' in reference to the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs: "I urge you to adhere to my Sunna and take the path of my well-directed and well-guided (*mahdi*) Caliphs (*khalīfa*)."[13] The fact that God's Messenger (PBUH) used it for the Caliphs shows that the term is not specific to one person.

However, the concept of 'the awaited Mahdi' must have come from Hadiths, for numerous people claimed to be the Mahdi. The first to exploit the idea was 'Ali's freed slave Kaysan, who claimed that 'Ali's younger son Muhammad b. Hanafiyya had not died, and that he had concealed himself in Mount Ridwan and one day would reappear to establish justice. Mukhtar al-Saqafi exploited the idea for his own ends. But Muhammad b. Hanafiyya had died in Medina in 81H, and his funeral prayers had been performed at that time led by Aban, the son of 'Uthman, who was then Governor of Medina.[14] In 128H Harith b. Shurayj said he was the expected Mahdi, but he was unable to make anyone believe it. It is recorded that he fabricated a Hadith saying "A saviour called Harith will appear."[15] Various people have claimed to be the Mahdi driven by either ambition for rank and fame, or self-interest, or nationalist feelings. But unfortunately they have been the cause of unrest in Muslim society.

Some representatives of the Mahdi movement who have appeared and gathered the masses around them are the Indian Mahdi, Sayyid Muhammad (d. 910/1504); the Maghrib Mahdi, 'Abdullah b. Tumart (d. 524/1103); Mirza Ghulam Ahmad al-Qadiyani, who appeared in India and supported the British; the Sudan Mahdi, Muhammad Ahmad (d. 1303/1885), who fought the British invasion forces and defeated them; the Somali Mahdi, Muhammad b. 'Abdillah Hasan (1339/1920), who appeared after returning from the Hajj and fought the British and Italians; and Eliah Muhammad, the leader of the American Black Muslims.[16] Another of those believed to the Mahdi was al-Sayyid Muhammad al-Sanusi, a descendant of the Prophet (PBUH).

There appear to have been *mahdis* who exploited belief in the Mahdi and broke the unity of the Islamic world. One should distinguish between frauds who

11. Aḥmad Amīn, *Ḍuḥa'l-Islām*, Beirut n.d., iii, 236; *al-Mahdi wa'l-Mahdawiyya*, Cairo 1953, 39; Goldziher, Ignaz, *al-'Aqīda wa'l-Sharī'a* [Arabic trans: Muḥammad Yūsuf Mūsa and others], Cairo 1336/1946, 342; Ibn Athīr, *Usd al-Ghāba Fī Ma'rifat al-Ṣaḥāba*, Cairo n.d., iv, 31.
12. Nu'aym b. al-Ḥammād, *Kitāb al-Fitan*, Süleyman Atıf Efendi ktp. no: 602, vrq., 53a.
13. *Tirmidhī*, al-'Ilm, 16; *Ibn Māja*, al-Muqaddima, 6; *Abū Dā'ūd*, al-Sunna, 5.
14. Aḥmad Amīn, *Ḍuḥa'l-Islām*, iii, 237; Uludağ, Süleyman, *İslam'da İnanç Konuları*, 435.
15. Sa'd Muḥammad Ḥasan, *al-Mahdiyya fi'l-Islām Mundh Aqdam al-'Uṣūr Ḥatta'l-Yawm*, Cairo 1953/1973, 183-4.
16. See, Sa'd Muḥammad Ḥasan, *al-Mahdiyya fi'l-Islām*, 81-273; Aḥmad Amīn, *al-Mahdi wa'l-Mahdawiyya*, 63, 72, 78-9, 80, 82, 84.

have proclaimed themselves the Mahdi and holy persons who lived lives of worship and piety, making no such claims. Even if out of their excessively good opinions of them, their followers have called them the Mahdi, they themselves have on the whole not accepted this. The first is fraudulent, while the second makes no such claim. Since this is so, those who attack the Mahdi question should make the distinction. False Mahdis have caused strife and division in the Islamic world. While Western orientalists have prepared the works of some of those who claimed to be *mahdis* for publication.[17]

It is a fact that some of those known as the Mahdi have been beneficial to their countries and peoples. We see, for instance, that the Mahdi movements in African countries like Sudan and Somalia liberated their countries from enemy occupation by their supreme efforts against the colonialist forces. Positive benefits have therefore been secured. On the other hand, however, the Qadiyani movement endeavoured to induce the Indian Muslims to adopt an altogether passive stance towards British imperialism.

III. The Mahdi question in the Qur'an and Sunna

Before examining Bediuzzaman's view of the Mahdi question, we have to ascertain whether or not the subject has any place in the Qur'an and Sunna.

Mahdi is not mentioned in the Qur'an as the title of a person expected at the end of time. However, numerous reformers are mentioned. If we see the Mahdi as a symbol of reform, we cannot say that it is not in the Qur'an. Persons and groups are mentioned who will save people from strife and bring light to societies in periods of darkness. The word *muhtadi*, which has the same meaning as *mahdi*, is found in three places in the Qur'an: *He whom God guides is rightly guided (al-muhtadi)*.[18] According to one view, the verse, *and to every people a guide*,[19] refers to the Mahdi.

To come to the narrations about the Mahdi: one cannot say that they are many, but it is said that a renewer or regenerator (*mujaddid*) will appear every century. Since the concepts related to the Mahdi are abstract, there may be many persons every century who fit them. It has been said that Jesus the son of Mary was a Mahdi in this sense.[20]

The Mahdi is mentioned explicitly in Hadith sources like Abu Da'ud, Tirmidhi, and Ibn Maja, from the six major collections. al-Shawkani, the famous Yemeni scholar, said there were fifty Hadiths about the Mahdi. He divides these into 'sound' (*ṣaḥīḥ*), most probably sound (*ḥasan*), and 'weak' (*ḍa'īf*). In his view, as a whole they are at the level of being unanimously reported (*mutawātir*). Whereas Siddiq Hasan Khan mentions thirty-three Hadith on the subject, including ones which are 'weak.'[21]

17. Sa'd Muḥammad Ḥasan, *al-Mahdiyya fi'l-Islām*, 195.
18. Qur'an, 7:178; 17:97; 18:17.
19. Qur'an, 13:7.
20. Ibn Kathīr, 'Imād al-Dīn Ismā'īl b. 'Umar, *'Alāmāt al-Qiyāma*, Cairo 1980, 33.
21. Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān, *al-Idhā'a limā kāna wa mā yakūnu bayna'l-yaday al-Sā'a*, Cairo 1407/1986, 114.

Although they are not classified as 'sound,' a 'saviour' at the end of time called "Imam" and "Khalifa" is mentioned in Bukhari and Muslim. In Bukhari, he is called "Imam." Commenting on the Hadith, "What will your condition be, when, although your Imam is one of you, the son of Mary will descend?",[22] scholars like Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani and the recent al-Kashmiri have said that it is the Mahdi that is intended by the Imam mentioned here.[23] Ibn Hajar, even, says that Jesus performing the prayers at the end of time before someone from the Umma is evidence for authentic views concerning the appearance of the Mahdi. In the continuation of his discussion he relates from Imam Shafi'i that the narrations stating that the Mahdi will be from this Umma and that Jesus will perform the prayers behind him are unanimously reported (*mutawātir*). While the famous *kalām* scholar Sa'd al-Din al-Taftazani understood the Mahdi from the term "Imam," and stated that this Hadith refers to the Mahdi.[24]

The Hadith in Muslim refers to a period of plenty and affluence at the end of time, and mentions a Caliph (*Khalifa*) who will distribute unbounded wealth.[25] Some have interpreted this Hadith in the light of the plenty at the time of 'Umar b. al-'Aziz. But the phrase in the Hadith "at the end of my Umma" shows that this plenty will occur in the last times of the Umma. Besides this, there are Hadiths connected with the Mahdi in sources like Abu Da'ud, Tirmidhi, Ibn Maja, and Ahmad b. Hanbal's *Musnad*. It is understood that Abu Da'ud attached the greatest importance to the Mahdi question for he assigned a separate section to it in his *Sunan*.

According to a narration by Umm Salama, God's Messenger (PBUH) said: "The Mahdi will be from my seed, and will be a descendant of my daughter Fatima."[26]

In another narration recorded by Abu Da'ud, he said: "If the world has only one day left, God will lengthen it and send that person from me." And in another: "... someone from my family whose name is the same as mine, and whose father's name is the same as my father's name. Contrarily to the world being filled with oppression and wrongdoing as it was previously, that person will fill it with justice and right."[27]

While in another narration, the Mahdi's lineage, physical characteristics, and activities are described as follows: "The Mahdi will be one of us. His forehead will be broad and his nose fine. He will fill the face of the earth with justice, as it had previously been filled with wrongdoing."[28]

In a narration from 'Ali, it says that God will bestow knowledge, understanding, and guidance on the Mahdi in a short space of time, even in one night.

22. *Bukhārī*, al-Anbiyā', 49.
23. al-'Asqalānī, Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Fatḥ al-Bārī*, Riyāḍ 1389/1969, vi, 570; al-Kashmīrī, *al-Taṣrīḥ*, Ḥalab, 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda, 1385/1965, 97.
24. al-Taftazānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, Beirut 1989, v, 314.
25. *Muslim*, Fitan, 67-9.
26. *Abū Dā'ūd*, al-Mahdi, 1.
27. *Abū Dā'ūd*, al-Mahdi, 1; *Tirmidhī*, al-Fitan, 52; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, i, 99.
28. *Abū Dā'ūd*, al-Mahdi, 1.

God's Messenger (PBUH) said: "The Mahdi will be of us. God will bestow guidance on him in a single night."[29]

Again as Abu Da'ud has recorded, one day 'Ali looked at his son Hasan and said: "This son of mine is a 'Sayyid,' so named by God's Messenger (PBUH). Someone will appear from his progeny who will bear the name of God's Messenger. He will resemble God's Messenger in deportment, but not in form." He then went on to describe his filling the face of the earth with justice.[30] These narrations which are included in reliable Hadith sources like the 'Six Books' are accepted by the Umma. From the point of view of the methodology of Hadith, there have been no objections raised about them suggesting they are false. Nevertheless, some weak Hadiths have also been recorded. Scholars of Hadith have discovered unreliable narrators in some narrations. For example, there are two unreliable narrators in the chain of authorities of a Hadith narrated from Husayn: "God's Messenger (PBUH) told Fatima: Good tidings for you! The Mahdi will be of your line."[31]

As is related in the sources, someone asked 'Ali about the Mahdi and he replied: "He will appear at the end of time. He will come at a time people will be condemned to death for saying 'Allah.'" And he continued: "God will gather around him a community who will fear nothing and will seek no benefits."[32] Although this is included in some books of Hadith, it is in fact not a Hadith, but a saying of 'Ali (May God be pleased with him).

There is the following Hadith mentioning the Mahdi's high standing: "We, the sons of 'Abd al-Muttalib, are the lords of the people of Paradise; me, Hamza, 'Ali, Ja'far, Hasan, Husayn, and the Mahdi."[33] For this reason, Tawus al-Yamani longed to live to see him. It is said that there is consensus about the Mahdi coming after the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs and Companions in respect of spiritual rank.[34]

Although no Hadith gives any information about when the Mahdi will appear, in one recorded by Tirmidhi it says that he will appear in the east.[35] The famous Qur'anic commentator Qurtubi (d. 671/1272) said he would appear in North Africa, but the narration he related concerning this is not authentic.[36] Qurtubi died in the early years of the Granada Nusayri's, when it was the only part of Spain left to the Muslims. According to Macdonald, Qurtubi's saying that the Mahdi would appear in North Africa arose from the need for a reformer and Mahdi at that time.[37]

29. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, i, 84.
30. *Abū Dā'ūd*, al-Mahdi, 1.
31. Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān, *al-Idhā'a*, 130.
32. Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān, *al-Idhā'a*, 128.
33. *Tirmidhī*, al-Fitan, 52; *Ibn Māja*, al-Fitan, 34.
34. al-Haythamī, Abu'l-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Ḥajar, *al-Qawl al-Muḫtaṣar fi'l-Mahdi'l-Muntaẓar*, Cairo 1406/1986; al-Safārīnī, *Lawāmi' al-Anwār*, ii, 85. Imam Rabbani says: "The Mahdi's rank appears to be higher than that of the Companions." See, Imām Rabbānī, *al-Maktūbāt*, Istanbul n.d., i, 45.
35. *Tirmidhī*, al-Fitan, 79.
36. al-Haythamī, *al-Qawl al-Muḫtaṣar*, 24.
37. Macdonald, D. B., "Mahdi," in İA, vii, 477.

The Meccan scholar al-Haythami (d. 973/1565) recorded that contrary to what is thought, the Mahdi's struggle will be bloodless. He says: "Those who pay allegiance to him will do so between the *Rukn* and *Maqam* (close to the Ka'ba). They will not awake those who are sleeping, and will certainly spill no blood."[38] This refutes the idea that the Mahdi's struggle will be with the sword, which has become a generally held belief.

Muhyiddin al-'Arabi (d. 638/1240) says that God will send His Caliph (*Khalifa*) at a time of widespread oppression and wrongdoing. He will fill the earth with justice. He will follow the path of God's Messenger without error. There will be an invisible angel who will correct his errors. In his time, a man who is ignorant, stingy, and cowardly in the evening, will be most learned, generous, and bold the following morning."[39]

Despite their differences, the shared points of the Hadiths may be said to be as follows: a) A person called the Mahdi who will be a descendant of God's Messenger (PBUH) will appear and establish justice; b) his name will be similar to that of God's Messenger; c) he will bring plenty and peace.

The contemporary writer Mawdudi, who considered that it was a sign of weakness that the Hadiths on this subject had not been included in Imam Malik, Bukhari and Muslim, accepted that some of them were sound, although he pointed out that the majority of narrators of Hadiths about the Mahdi were Shi'is. He said that in principle, God's Messenger did not go into details. He pointed out that the Hadiths could have been fabricated in the 'Abbasid period for the purpose of supporting the Caliphate. He particularly considered to be false the Hadiths about the support of "the black bannered ones," a sign of the 'Abbasids.[40] The Egyptian scholar Ahmad Amin says that this justifies rejecting all the Hadiths about the Mahdi.[41] He considered that they were narrations that had been fabricated in connection with the struggle for power between the Umayyads and 'Abbasids. While the matter the Iraqi scholar Muhsin 'Abd al-Hamid criticizes are the Hadiths concerning the Mahdi which the Shi'a expect.[42] al-Albani alludes to the soundness of the Hadiths, saying: "The appearance of the Mahdi is a fact accepted by scholars."[43]

However, although Hadith specialists accept the existence of weak narrations, they are of the opinion that it is not possible to deny the Mahdi question in Hadith literature, in respect of either the name or the concept. For they are narrated by the most eminent of the Companions, among whom are 'Ali b. Abi Talib, Ibn 'Abbas, Ibn 'Umar, Talha, Ibn Mas'ud, Abu Hurayra, Anas b. Malik, Umm Salama, Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, Umm Habiba, Thawban, Qurra b. Iyas, 'Abdullah b. Harith b. al-Jaz', and 'Ali al-Hilali. The narrations were verified by

38. al-Haythamī, *al-Qawl al-Muḫtaṣar*, 53.
39. al-'Arabī, Muḥyī'l-Dīn, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 366.
40. Mevdudi, Ebu'l-A'la, *Meseleler ve Çözümler* [Turk. trans: Yusuf Kara], Istanbul 1990, 45.
41. Aḥmad Amīn, *Ḍuḥā'l-Islām*, iii, 237-8.
42. Muhsin Abdülhamid, *Islam'a Yönelen Yıkıcı Hareketler* [Turk. trans: M. Saim Yeprem/ Hasan Güleç], 53.
43. al-Albānī, Nāṣir al-Dīn, *Silsilat al-Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥa*, Kuwait 14041984, ii. 336; iii, 38-43.

famous authorities on Hadiths like Abu Da'ud, Tirmidhi, Ibn Maja, al-Bazzar, al-Hakim, and Tabarani. If there is anything vague in these Hadiths, it springs not from their being weak but from the conciseness of the Prophet's language. They have become so widely known and accepted by the Umma that scholars like al-Kattani said that they are in effect unanimously reported by a number of authorities (*mutawātir al-ma'na*).[44]

It has been noted by many writers that the Mahdi Hadiths were seriously criticized by the Muslim historian and sociologist Ibn Khaldun (733/1332). They have said even that Ibn Khaldun denied the existence of the Mahdi because he considered the Hadiths about the subject to be weak. And in truth we see that Ibn Khaldun was one of the scholars who has dealt with the question in detailed manner. He says that events which will occur in the future pertain to the Unseen (*ghayb*), and that man cannot know such matters if they are not informed of them by God by means of revelation or dreams. In objective manner he states that the Mahdi question has been famous among Muslims down the centuries and it has been believed that the appearance is necessary of someone who will strengthen religion and establish justice. Ibn Khaldun analyses Hadiths on the subject, together with their chains of authorities and narrators, and comes to this conclusion: "It appears that with very few exceptions, the Hadiths have not been free of criticism."[45] It is not possible to conclude from this that Ibn Khaldun denied the Mahdi question. He criticizes the sufis' understanding of it, which was pretty detailed. In his opinion, their views about the Mahdi were derived from Shi'ism.

It is seen from this that even Ibn Khaldun, who approached the Mahdi Hadiths very cautiously, did not reject the question outright. He said: "with very few exceptions." It may be understood from this that even if they are few in number, there are sound Hadiths on the subject. I am therefore of the opinion that it would be wrong to reject the Hadiths out of hand, and that even if there are weak ones among them, it does not mean they should all be denied. It is clear that one does not have to conclude that all the apples in the basket are rotten if one or two are.

Ibn Khaldun makes the following sociological point: "It is a sociological fact that if someone appears unsupported by any force or people, he will not be successful only by being related to the Prophet's Family. The power of a people is necessary to be successful in order to support him and defend him until he can gain a dominant position."[46] He points out that someone on his own will be unable to achieve largescale reforms.

I want to include Mawdudi's interpretation here. He says that there is no particular position or place in religion for the Mahdi. It is completely wrong to think that one is obliged to believe in the Mahdi as one is obliged to believe in the prophets: "Whenever the Mahdi does come, he will have thorough knowledge of

44. al-Kattānī, Muḥammad b. Ja'far, *Naẓm al-Mutanāthir fī Khabar al-Mutawātir*, Aleppo n.d., 144-6.
45. Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, ii, 822.
46. Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, ii, 817.

the learning, culture, conditions, and necessities of the time, he will take steps appropriate to that time, he will take advantage of the scientific discoveries and technology of the time, and employ them in the best way."[47]

IV. Bediuzzaman's views on the Mahdi question

Bediuzzaman explains first of all the reasons for the question being vague and the Mahdi not being known by everyone. Due to the vagueness about certain persons who are to appear at the end of time, like the Mahdi and Sufyan, they were awaited long previously, even in the time of the generation following the Companions. They hoped to live to see them.

> "Like with the end of the world, Divine wisdom requires that the times of these individuals are not specified. Because every age is in need of the meaning of the Mahdi, who will strengthen the people's morale and save them from despair. Each century has to have a share of this meaning. And so that people should not heedlessly conform to evil things and the reins of their indifferent souls should not be left free, every century the fearsome individuals who come to lead strife must be shrunk from and feared. If they had been specified, general guidance would have been of no benefit."[48]

We may say therefore that in Bediuzzaman's view every age has its Mahdi. It is understood from this that the Mahdi is not an individual. Although he speaks of "the Great Mahdi,"

> "...since there is need for a sort of Mahdi every age at the time of despair, in order to strengthen morale, through Divine mercy, every age, or perhaps every century, a sort of Mahdi has emerged from the Prophet's Family, and has preserved the Shari'a of his forefather and revived his Sunna."

As an example for the world of politics, he gives Mahdi (875-885), the third of the 'Abbasid Caliphs. And for the world of religion he gives Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir Gilani and Shah Naqshband. He describes them as "persons who carried out some of the functions of the Great Mahdi."[49]

He says that the Great Mahdi will receive his strength from the community of Sayyids, who are descended from Muhammad (PBUH) and are called *Al-i Bayt* (the Prophet's Family). "There is no family that is as mutually supportive, and no tribe that is in such agreement, and no group or community that is as enlightened as the family, tribe, group, and community of the Prophet's Family."[50]

When commenting on the verse, *Say: I ask of you no recompense save love of close kin*,[51] Bediuzzaman says that God's Messenger's (PBUH) wanting this love was not due to blood relationship; he wanted the Umma to unite around his family because the elevated persons and spiritual guides of the Umma would for the most part emerge from his family:

47. Mevdudi, *Meseleler ve Çözümler*, 47, 50, 51.
48. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Sözler*, Istanbul 1986, 309-10 / *The Words* [English trans.], Istanbul, Sözler Publications 1993, 353.
49. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Şualar*, 496.
50. *Şualar*, 496.
51. Qur'an, 42:23.

"With his vision which penetrated the Unseen, God's Messenger (PBUH) saw that his Family would become like a light-giving tree within the world of Islam. The overwhelming majority of those who would perform the duty of guides instructing every level of the World of Islam in human attainment and perfection would emerge from his Family."

Bediuzzaman explains the Prophet's great tenderness for Hasan and Husayn as not arising from out of feelings of family or kinship, but because he saw the Imams, spiritual poles, and Mahdis who would emerge from their blessed lines, "and he would kiss their heads in the name of all of them. Yes, Shah Geylani has a large part in his kissing Hasan's head."[52] He is saying here that God's Messenger gave the greatest importance to his Family, emphasizing that Muslims should unite around them in every period and strive to revive Islam, and that numerous Mahdis had emerged from his descendants. It is understood too that the Mahdi is not just one person.

Bediuzzaman gives various examples of eminent persons from the Prophet's Family, and it is his view that they were all Mahdis. For example, Sayyid Ahmad al-Sanusi (d. 1320/1902), the leader of the Sanusi Order and spiritual guide of millions; and Sayyid Idris (d. 1370/1950?), who guided more than a hundred thousand people; and another sayyid, Sayyid Yahya (d. 1368/1948), who commanded hundreds of thousands of people. Just as among the individuals of this tribe of Sayyids there are numerous outward commanders, so too there are "the heroes of spiritual heroes," like Sayyid 'Abd al-Qadir Gilani (d. 562/1167), Sayyid Abu'l-Hasan al-Shazali (d. 657/1258), and Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi (d. 675/1276).[53] Since they were all permanently in the service of Islam, by being leaders of sufi orders or in some other way, he describes them as "commanders."

In the supplication in the *tashahhud* in the five daily prayers, which is recited by all Muslims at least five times every day, it is said: "O God, grant blessings to our master Muhammad and to the Family of our master Muhammad, as you granted blessings to Abraham and to the Family of Abraham." The prophets of the Family of Abraham illuminated mankind with the light of guidance. Although the Family of Muhammad cannot attain the degree of the prophets, they have all performed the service of a prophet and continue to do so. Bediuzzaman says that the totality of those commanders forms a vast army. If they acquired a physical form and through their solidarity were formed into a division, and if they aroused the religion of Islam and its sacred nationhood and bound it together in unity, no nation or force could withstand them. "Thus, that numerous and powerful army is the Family of Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him), the most select of the Mahdi's armies."[54]

52. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Lem'alar*, 20-1 / *The Flashes Collection* [Eng. trans.], Istanbul, Sözler Publications 1995, 36-7.
53. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Mektûbat*, Istanbul 1976, 412 / *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Letters 1928-1932* [Eng. trans.], Istanbul, Sözler Publications 1994, 515 fn 6.
54. *Mektûbat*, 412 / *Letters*, 515.

"Yes, today in the world there is no family distinguished by such high honour and elevated qualities and nobility in its descendants, in unbroken succession and well-documented genealogy, which is as powerful and important as the line of Sayyids of the Family of the Prophet. Since early times it is they who have been at the heads of all the groups of the people of truth, and they who have been the renowned leaders of the people of perfection. Now it is a blessed line numbering millions. Vigilant and circumspect, their hearts full of belief and love of the Prophet, they are distinguished by the honour of their world-renowned lineage. Momentous events shall occur which will awaken and arouse the sacred force within that vast community... Certainly, the elevated ardour in that huge force will surge up and the Mahdi shall come to lead it, guiding it to the way of truth and reality. We await from the Divine law and Divine mercy that it should be such, and its being such, like we await the coming of spring after winter; and we are right to await it..."[55]

While describing the functions and duties of the Mahdi and the luminous community which is tied to him, Bediuzzaman says that they "will repair the destruction of the innovative regime of the Sufyan's covert organization."[56] It is understood from this that the Mahdi's duties will not be based on brute force and the use of force, they will consist of 'repairing' and reforming of a spiritual and moral kind.

It is seen from this that Bediuzzaman's ideas about the Mahdi are in conformity with Ibn Khaldun's sociological analysis. It is my opinion that if people like the contemporary writers 'Abd al-Karim al-Hatib and 'Abdullah al-Samman, who reject the idea of the Mahdi, had seen this interpretation, they would not have rejected the question outright.

Bediuzzaman was not in expectation of an extra-ordinary figure. He believed that everything occurs within the framework of the universal laws. Whether or not the apparent meanings of the Qur'an and Sunna were conformable with reason, he was not an unprogressive, rigid scholar in that respect. For instance, he discusses terms like 'reformer,' 'perfect guide,' 'regenerator of religion,' and 'Caliph' within the category of Mahdi. He considers it essential from the point of view of "God's laws" that there are "reformers" in times of strife and dissension. Thus, God Almighty will send a luminous person as a supreme renewer and guide at the time of greatest corruption at the end of time, and that person will a member of the Prophet's Family.[57]

However powerful an individual is, he cannot carry out extensive reforms on his own. Bediuzzaman thus elucidates the matter that Ibn Khaldun mentioned as a sociological point, "relying on a power." In Bediuzzaman's view, the source of the Mahdi's power would be the Prophet's descendants, that is, the people of his line. He indicates that they fairly numerous and powerful. It is they who are at the head of the people of reality. They number millions. The momentous affairs that will occur will be set into motion by the sacred power residing in that vast community. He considers that the Divine laws necessitate the realization of this.[58]

55. *Mektûbat*, 412-3 / *Letters*, 515.
56. *Mektûbat*, 413 / *Letters*, 515.
57. *Mektûbat*, 411-2 / *Letters*, 514.
58. *Mektûbat*, 412 / *Letters*, 514.

Bediuzzaman says that the Mahdi will carry out three important functions: (a) silencing completely the idea of materialism; this is also called the stage of belief; (b) reviving the marks of Islam, which is also called the stage of life; (c) with the assistance of all believers and support of Islamic unity, and the joining together of all the scholars and saints, and particularly the many Sayyids each century, he will strive to carry out that great function; this is also called the stage of the Shari'a.[59] Thus, the Mahdi will not appear with his sword in his hand and reform everything. It is understood that he shall carry out reforms not on his own, but together with a large movement formed of the Prophet's Family, who constitute a pure, unsullied mass of Muslims. In another work, the Mahdi's three functions are described like this: belief, life, and the Shari'a, the most important of which according to Bediuzzaman is belief.[60]

> "At this time there are currents so overwhelming that they draw everything to their own account. So even if the true awaited person, who will come next century, were to come now, my conjecture is that he would forego the situation in the political world and change his goal so as not to let his movement be carried away on those currents.
>
> "Also, there are three matters: one is life, another is the Shari'a, and another is belief. In the view of reality, the most important and the greatest is the question of belief. But in the view of most people at this time, compelled by the world situation, the most important appear to be life and the Shari'a. And so, even if he was to come now, since to change these three matters altogether throughout the world is not keeping with the Divine laws in force in human kind, he would surely take the greatest matter as the basis, and not the others, so that the service of belief would not spoil its purity in the general view and so that he would not let that service be the tool for other aims in the minds of ordinary people, who are easily deceived."[61]

If Bediuzzaman's words are noted carefully, it is seen that he does not consider the Mahdi to be someone who will set everything in order miraculously with the sword. He sees him as a normal human being and great reformer, and speaks of the luminous community around him. He says he will revive the Sunna of God's Messenger (PBUH) and that his struggle with the forces of evil will be moral and spiritual. From the point of view of the Divine laws, it would be possible for someone who acts in this way within the bounds of causality to be successful. God, Who in a minute fills the space between the heavens and earth with clouds and empties it, and calms a storm at sea in a second, and creates the summer in an hour within the spring, and a winter storm in summer in an hour, can certainly dispel the darknesses of the Islamic world through the Mahdi.[62]

It is said in a Hadith that there will be a group in Islamic society which will always persist in right: "There will be a group of my Umma which will persist in right until the end of the world.[63] God's Messsenger (PBUH) mentions a group

59. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Emirdağ Lahikası*, Istanbul 1958, i, 259-60.
60. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 57.
61. *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 58.
62. *Mektûbat*, 411-2 / *Letters*, 514.
63. *Muslim*, al-Īmān, 247.

in this Hadith, which was recorded by Muslim. He says that this group will renew religious matters, strive in the way of religion, spread justice, will adopt absolutely correct measures, and present Islam to humanity. This is in conformity with the natural laws God has placed in the universe, and the spirit of Islam and its practical teachings. Almighty God can create true Mahdis and hundreds of reformers every age, and that is in fact what He has done. And so it shall be in the future.

Bediuzzaman comments on the above Hadith and remarks that the service performed by the students of the Risale-i Nur, "the Qur'anic miracle this century," may be included in its meaning. He makes a number of predictions concerning the continuation in the coming century of the service of the Risale-i Nur that he had begun. He deduces from a Hadith that this service will become increasingly brilliant until the start of the 16th century of the Hijra, following which an evil movement will gain dominance.[64]

Conclusion

Wherever there is strife and destruction, the question arises of a good and reform movement to combat it. This means that reform movements are a natural need of the Islamic Umma, necessitated by a law God has placed in the universe. It is a social fact that people will be in need of reformers at the end of time, when social and moral corruption will increase, and disbelief and denial become more widespread. On looking at history from the sociological point of view, that is how it has always been.

The institution of the Mahdi is not a basic article of faith for the Ahl-i Sunna (the Sunnis) as it is with the Shi'a. Certain proof is not therefore required for the matters connected with the events of the end of time, which are not counted among the fundamentals of belief but as secondary matters. It is sufficient "only not to reject them or attack them." It is true the Mahdi is not mentioned by name in Bukhari and Muslim, but one may say that he is mentioned as a concept under such names as "Imam," "Caliph," "a group which will persist in right," and so on, which will undertake the role of the Mahdi. Ibn Khaldun criticized the Hadiths about the Mahdi, but he did not reject them outright. He agreed that some were 'sound,' even only a few of them. Moreover, the meaning of a Hadith is not necessarily wrong if it is 'weak' or 'forged.' Even it if is certain it is not a Hadith, it may still be right in meaning.

According to Bediuzzaman, belief in the appearance of a person, the Mahdi, in a particular place or at a particular time is wrong. For there may be reformers who bear this meaning, and virtuous persons, in every period. It is heedlessness to idly expect the Mahdi to set everything to rights, and an unknown person to appear and save society; to neglect one's duties and responsibilities because the Mahdi is going to come. If the idea of the Mahdi truly causes society to be lazy and idle, it is wrong. But if like the Americans who plant up their country with

64. For further explanation, see, *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 23.

trees in preparation of Jesus' coming, the Muslims make efforts to prepare the ground for the Mahdi, it is a good thing.

As is understood from Bediuzzaman's writings, the Mahdi is not an individual, but a movement, school, or community, whose activities are spread over a considerable period of time. For it is not possible for an individual to establish justice, as is stated in Hadiths. This may be carried only through the joint action of a community, a numerous collectivity, or a large group of Muslims. In my opinion, one may think of the Mahdi as a concept. In every period, believers are on the side of good and right. And at all times there is need for this, for there has always been conflict between good and evil, and so it will continue till the end of the world. Therefore, so long as the way of good is taken, it means that the result of following the Mahdi has been achieved. It is much more to the point to be present wherever good is rather than waiting for an imaginary Mahdi. Everything being clear and obvious is opposed to the principle of trial and examination. Even if someone is the Mahdi, it will not be announced from the heavens. However, it is not right to reject the idea of the Mahdi outright because false Mahdis might appear. False prophets appeared like Musaylimat al-Kazzab, but it did not mean prophethood had to be rejected. And the appearance of phony doctors does not necessitate rejecting the medical profession. Bediuzzaman's views are in conformity with the laws in force in the universe. There is nothing in them exceeding the bounds of what is reasonable... Bediuzzaman states that there are numerous Mahdis. The Great Mahdi expected at the end of time is the last of the Mahdis and reformers. He too will be a normal human being, not superhuman. He will perform his function within the framework of the laws of creation and on an international level.

* * *

Said Nursi's Views on the Science of *Kalam* as Portrayed in the Risale-i Nur

Yusuf Şevki Yavuz

I. Introduction

Said Nursi said that the Sunni School (*mezheb*) was the school which is in conformity with the Qur'an and Sunna, and that other schools (people of innovation) went to excess in either one way or the other. It is in fact difficult to say that he thought any school (*mezheb*) had adopted views which were entirely wrong. He said rather that the measure of a school being correct was its correct or right aspects preponderating, and false schools he called those the majority of whose views were false. Bediuzzaman considered the Sunnis to be the true or correct school because truth is predominant in its fundamental beliefs. Although the schools outside the Sunnis hold views which are true, their false views are more numerous.[1] One has to say therefore that he was a scholar who followed the Sunni line. However, as in the example of the verse, *Say: I ask of you no recompense save love of close kin*,[2] which is related to the concept of the Family of the Prophet, where he favoured the meaning applied by Shi'i scholars, he

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1. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Mektûbat*, Istanbul 1986, 97-8, 318; *Sözler*, Istanbul 1987, 359-61, 451-6.

2. Qur'an, 42:23.

thought differently to Sunni scholars. But his favouring different views on this and a number of other points does not mean he ceased following the Sunni line, for there are other Sunni scholars who ascribed the same meaning to the above verse.

The treatises or pieces of the Risale-i Nur, which are gathered together in the Risale-i Nur Collection, consist of works which were considered by their author to expound the truths of belief and to be a miracle of the Qur'an. For according to Said Nursi, all the parts of the Risale-i Nur consist of inspirations born in his heart from the effulgence of the Qur'an, which were alluded to in the writings of the some of the great saints.[3] Their author stated therefore that the treatises spoke of truths that pertained not to himself but to the Qur'an.[4] Nevertheless, since he says that one of the methods he follows in the treatises is "reflective thinking" (*tefekkür*),[5] one may say that they are the product of human knowledge. For it is an indisputable fact that reflective thought is the chief human characteristic.

Although the Risale-i Nur contains just about all the subjects dealt with in the science of *kalām*, Said Nursi said that now the Risale-i Nur had been written, no need remained for the sources of that science.[6] For since it is full of human knowledge, the sources of the science of *kalām* followed a method difficult to understand. These sources cannot therefore raise people to a level of belief in God's existence, unity, and attributes which satisfies them. Whereas the Risale-i Nur employs a method which penetrates to the heart and spirit and aiming to take man to the truths of belief, opens up windows in all beings and events which take him to knowledge of God.[7] For in explaining and proving the questions of belief, the Risale-i Nur follows the Qur'anic way, which is easy, and a method which combines the reason and spirit, an illustrative method which passes from the reason to the heart and from the heart to the reason.[8] It is understood from this that Bediuzzaman agreed with former criticisms of the scholars of *kalām*, made by Salafi scholars such as Ahmad b. Hanbal, Ibn Taymiyya, and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, thinkers like Ibn Rushd, and sufis like Mawlana Jalaluddin al-Rumi.

II. Said Nursi's views on the questions of *kalām*

One may list the subjects of *kalām* included in the Risale-i Nur as the problem of knowledge, philosophy of nature, Godhead, man's actions and Divine Determining, prophethood, the hereafter, the signs of the end of the world, belief-sin-accusations of unbelief, and politics.

3. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Kastamonu Lahikası*, Istanbul 1960, 9, 150; *Şualar*, Istanbul 1960, 418, 567, 611, 632; *Sikke-i Tasdik-i Gaybi*, Istanbul 1988, 91-110.
4. *Mektûbat*, 344, 347-50; *Şualar*, 563-4; *Barla Lahikası*, Istanbul 1987, 98-9; *Münâzarat*, Istanbul 1991, 48-9.
5. *Mektûbat*, 429-32; *Sözler*, 445-8; *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, Istanbul 1991, 175-7.
6. *Sikke-i Tasdik-i Gaybî*, 95.
7. *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, 10-1.
8. *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 133; *Sikke-i Tasdik-i Gaybî*, 7, 95.

A. The problem of knowledge

1. The acquisition of knowledge

In conformity with the scholars of *kalām*, Said Nursi favoured the view that man can acquire knowledge through his senses, intellect, and means of communication, and can therefore obtain knowledge about beings and events. On the question of the acquisition of knowledge, his views were the reverse of those of the Sophists and sceptics. He stated that all beings and events are manifestations of the Divine Name of Truth (*Hakk*). Although beings are contingent in relation to God's existence, Who has true existence, it is clear they do not consist only of illusion or imagination.[9] It is seen clearly that Said Nursi favoured the opinion of the scholars of *kalām*, who expressed the world's having true existence as "the reality of things is constant (*thābit*),"[10] so that the way had been paved for the acquisition of knowledge.

2. The sources of knowledge

Said Nursi describes the sources of knowledge as being the senses, information, intellect, intuitive knowledge and inspiration, revelation, dreams, taking omens (*tefe'ul*), and the science of *jafr*.

a. The senses: According to Bediuzzaman, the sense organs are manifestations of Divine mercy, and sources of knowledge leading people to understanding of the the mysteries of the Divine Names, and finally to knowledge of God.[11]

b. Information: Said Nursi said there were two sorts of information, unanimously reported information, which whether explicit or implicit expresses certain knowledge. However, the group reporting the information has to consider lying to be immoral and so refrains from it. What is important in reports which are unanimous, is not how an event occurred, but its occurrence.[12] As for singly reported events, which are related to God's Messenger (PBUH) and included in the 'Six Books,' they may be a source of knowledge under certain conditions. Since single reports express hypothetical knowledge, they cannot be used as definite proofs in the questions of belief. For certain knowledge is necessary for these.[13] On studying Said Nursi's views on information being a source of knowledge, one may say that they are identical to those of the scholars of *kalām*.

c. Intellect: As for the intellect or reason being a source of knowledge, Bediuzzaman considered the use of it to be the chief factor preventing people deviating from the truth. He said that for a thought which occurs to the mind to become knowledge, it has to pass through stages like imagination, conception, affirmation, favouring, and belief, and in the event of there being a clash between revelation and the principles of reason, revelation should be interpreted in the light of the reason. Nevertheless, he did not consider the reason or intellect

9. *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, 117-8; *Sözler*, 447-8.
10. al-Nasafî, *al-'Aqā'id*, Istanbul 1320, 316.
11. *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, 177-8; *Mektûbat*, 307-8.
12. *Mektûbat*, 86-7.
13. *Mektûbat*, 103-4; *Şualar*, 339; *Muhâkemat*, Istanbul 1977, 52.

to be an absolute or perfect source of knowledge.[14] These views of Bediuzzaman's are similar to those of recent scholars of *kalām* like Elmalı Muhammad Hamdi and İsmail Hakkı İzmirli.[15]

d. Intuitive knowledge and inspiration: Bediuzzaman said that inspiration was a necessary consequence of the Divine Names of Loving, All-Merciful, and Compassionate, and was knowledge imparted directly to man's heart by God, of the sort called *sünûhat*. By means of the inspirations sent them people acquire the knowledge they need, the same as animals and plants. These inspirations which animate creatures receive are at the same time clear proof of God's existence and unity.[16]

c. Dreams: Said Nursi favoured the view that dreams teach man certain facts, if only indirectly, and that true dreams are a window opening onto the World of the Unseen. He points out nevertheless that not all dreams are true and that some of them reflect human desires and anxieties.[17] This view of Said Nursi's conforms to information about dreams in the Qur'an and Sunna. For attention is drawn to the importance and varieties of dreams both in the Qur'an and in the Sunna.

f. Taking omens by means of books (tefe'ul): Bediuzzaman agreed that this is a source of knowledge and was of the view it should be done with various books of poetry rather than the Qur'an.[18]

g. Jafr: Said Nursi also considered the science of *jafr* to be a source of knowledge. According to him, the source of *jafr*, which is based on *abjad* reckoning, is the treatise *Jaljalutiyya* written by 'Ali b. Abi Talib in Arabic and Syriac. He considered *jafr* to be one of the keys of the Unseen (*ghayb*), and also to be an aspect of the Qur'an's miraculousness. He stated that the Qur'an's verses have numerous meanings besides their explicit meanings, and that these may be known by means of the science of *jafr*.[19] In his writings he said also that he himself had obtained knowledge of the Unseen by means of *jafr*. It is said that *jafr*, which Bediuzzaman considered to be a source of knowledge by means of which hidden truths may be disclosed, has no basis in Islam and is based on narrations originating in Shi'ism, through which it became incorporated in Islamic culture.[20]

B. Philosophy of nature

As is believed by the majority of Sunni scholars, Said Nursi believed that the phenomena of nature occur through the effect of Divine power and will. Although the occurrence of particular events is tied to the existence of particular

14. *Muhâkemat*, 10, 34; *Sözler*, 658.
15. For views of modern *kalam* scholars, see Yusuf Şevki Yavuz "Akıl," in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, ii, 244-5; xi, 60.
16. *Şualar*, 104-6; *Sözler*, 121-2, 614; *Mektûbat*, 179, 363.
17. *Mektûbat*, 322-5.
18. *Mektûbat*, 323; *Sikke-i Tasdik-i Gaybî*, 114, 126.
19. *Şualar*, 224-30, 487, 599-600, 620-7; *Sikke-i Tasdik-i Gaybî*, 45-54; *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 151-3; *Lem'alar*, Istanbul 1986, 28-36.
20. Yurdagur, Metin, "Cefr," in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vii, 217.

causes, the causes do not possess the power to have an effect on their own; on the contrary, their effectiveness is entirely the work of Divine power. People seeing the causes of natural phenomena as having a true effect is related to "custom" or "habit;" specific causes always having specific effects has led to them to think that causes possess the power to have the effects.[21] Thus, concerning the philosophy of nature, Bediuzzaman followed Ash'ari's view, which has since early times been criticized by the Mu'tazilites, Salafiyya, and Islamic philosophers; he stated that causes do not have a true effect. Following Baqillani and Ghazzali, he subscribed to the theory of "custom" or "habit."[22]

C. Godhead

1. Divine existence

Said Nursi did not consider that the evidences proving the Necessary Existence developed by the Islamic philosophers and scholars of *kalām* were sufficiently clear for everyone to be able to profit from them. One may summarize his proofs of God's existence under four headings:

a) The proof of man's inborn nature: The fact that throughout history men have believed in the existence of a God and have constantly searched for an elevated Being in whom they could take refuge demonstrates that the need to believe in God is an innate sense, and this sense demonstrates the existence of a Creator who brought them into being. People can endure many disasters due to this sense.[23] It appears that Said Nursi reiterated this proof, which has been repeated by scholars of *kalām* and Western thinkers since the 4th century of the Hijra, and introduced no new approach to it.[24]

b) The proof of createdness: The fact that all the beings in the universe undergo constant change show that they are not pre-eternal, but created in time. For all beings are either in a state of motion or in a state of rest. Motion and rest are both accidental and created, and all created things have to have a creator, and that creator is God.[25] Despite criticizing the science of *kalām* and saying that no need remained for works on the subject, Said Nursi did not refrain from repeating the well-known proof, as a proof of the scholars of *kalām*.

c) The proof of contingency: The fact that out of innumerable alternatives in regard to essence and attributes, all the beings in the universe possess a single appropriate state shows that they are contingent. Just as something dead necessitates one who killed it, craftsmanship necessitates the craftsman, and a child necessitates its father ... so the universe's being contingent shows it is the work of a Necessary Being.[26]

21. *Lem'alar*, 106-8; *Sözler*, 185; *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, 62, 165; *İşaratü'l-I'caz*, Istanbul n.d., 158-9, 282-3.
22. For Ash'ari's view, see, Yusuf Şevki Yavuz, "Eş'ariyye," *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, xi, 449-50, 454.
23. *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, 59-60, 148-9, 214-5; *Lem'alar*, 130; *Sözler*, 653; *İşaratü'l-I'caz*, 85.
24. Topaloğlu, Bekir, *Allah'ın Varlığı*, Ankara 1979, 110.
25. *Muhâkemat*, 111-6; *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, 213-4.
26. *Şualar*, 119; *Muhâkemat*, 110; *İşaratü'l-I'caz*, 173; *Asâ-yı Mûsa*, Istanbul 1992, 118.

Said Nursi called the proof he set out more in a way that recalls the proofs of createdness and order, the proof of contingency. He considered inappropriate the *kalām* scholars' proof of contingency, which is based on negating causality and endless chains of causes, and tried to offer a different explanation. But the general understanding of the proof of contingency, which proceeds from the idea of "the non-existence of beings not being a rational impossibility," appears to be pretty different to Bediuzzaman's view of the proof.

d) The proof of order: The order present in the universe as a whole and in all its parts indicates the being who set them in order; and the wise and purposeful aspects and beauties in all things point clearly to the being who created them. This being must possess superior attributes, limitless knowledge, and endless power in order for there to be a reasonable explanation for the astonishing order and wise works which govern the universe. Denial of a creator with superior attributes means denying the order of the universe, its art, which dumbfounds man, and the wisdom and purposes of beings, which is not possible. Like Ibn Rushd and other Muslim thinkers, while setting out the proof of wisdom and order, Said Nursi pointed out the sun, moon, and stars revolving in their particular orbits, their being bound to each through the force of gravity, the world being suitable to human life in every respect, and to the lives of animals and plants, and tried to demonstrate that these constitute very clear proofs of God's existence.[27] He emphasized that it was necessary to dwell on this proof, which the Qur'an also emphasizes. It is to be seen that contemporary Islamic thinkers show the same tendency.[28]

2. God's Unity

According to Said Nursi, the fact that all beings belong to species is an important evidence of God's unity. For all beings have a relation with unity by virtue of the unity of their species. That is, there is a manifestation of unity in all beings. If one notes carefully the principle "unity can proceed only from one," the Creator's unity becomes clear. Also, all beings resembling each other, firstly in their createdness, indicates that the being who created them is one.[29] Said Nursi changed the principle "only one [thing] can proceed from one [being],"[30] which had been put forward by philosophers to prove the theory of the 'Ten Intellects,' into "the unity in all beings arises from a single being," and used it to prove Divine unity.

Bediuzzaman also presented the 'tamanu' proof concerning Divine unity, the principles of which are mentioned in the Qur'an, and which was later developed by the scholars of *kalām*. This demonstrates that the order in the universe submits to a single will. Had there been more than one will, clashes and chaos in the universe would have been unavoidable.[31]

27. *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, 17-8, 49-50, 95-6; *Asâ-yı Mûsa*, 179-80; *Sözler*, 563-5, 617-8, 636-7.
28. Topaloğlu, Bekir, *Allah'ın Varlığı*, 143.
29. *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, 124; *Sözler*, 616-22; *Muhâkemat*, 119; *Şualar*, 17-19; *Mektûbat*, 211-3.
30. Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, Beirut 1930, 237.
31. *Sözler*, 637-8; *Şualar*, 128; *Lem'alar*, 180-1.

3. Divine attributes

Said Nursi's views on the Divine attributes may be summarized as follows: in respect of His essence, the Necessary Existent is a being. He therefore resembles no other being in His essence, attributes, and actions. For apart from Him, there is no being that is Necessarily Existent; on the contrary, all others are contingent. Since God is not a corporeal being, He is in no need of time and place, He is above and beyond them. Whereas corporeal beings cannot be free of time and place.

In classifying the Divine attributes, Said Nursi generally followed the views of the scholars of *kalām*, dividing them into four groups: essential (*zatî*), positive (*subûtî*), active (*fi'lî*), and *haberî*. He added the attributes of power, knowledge, will and speech to essential attributes like pre-eternal, eternal, and uncreatedness, which have generally been called the *subûtî* attributes by the scholars of *kalām*. However, Said Nursi said the *subûtî* attributes consisted of life, knowledge, will, power, hearing, sight, and speech, and included these among the *subûtî* attributes.[32] It is understood therefore that Said Nursi favoured the view of the scholars who named the *selbî* (negative or negating) and *subûtî* (positive) attributes, essential (*zatî*) attributes.

Said Nursi related the active (*fi'lî*) attributes to the attribute of creation (*tekvin*), and stated that God creates in two ways: firstly is creation from non-existence, which is expressed with the concepts of origination (*ibda'*), invention (*ihtira'*), and giving of existence (*îcad*). His creating the world through the command "Be!" is an example of this. Secondly is the creation of a being out of existing beings, which is expressed with the concepts of composition (*inşa'*) and raising to life. His creating a new being out of beings He created from nothing forms the second sort of creative act. However, Said Nursi agreed with the majority of the Sunnis, that the creative act is realized directly by God, not sharing the view of those who say it is brought about indirectly.[33]

As for the attributes known as *haberî*, Said Nursi said it was impossible to attribute to God with their apparent meanings the attributes allegorical verses and Hadiths describe, thus reiterating exactly the views of the scholars of *kalām*. Metaphorical meanings are illustrated by means of concepts which address man's senses in order to make them more readily understandable. For most people find it difficult to understand abstract meanings. For example, what is meant by "form" in the Hadith "God created man in His own form" is character, conduct, and attributes. For it is impossible for 'form' to be attributed to God.[34]

4. Man's actions and Divine Determining

According to Said Nursi, the start of man's actions is related to 'particularized' will (*cüz'î irade*), and their end to universal (*küllî*) will. Man's will and power are infinitesimal. Man is therefore defective and impotent and cannot

32. *İşaratü'l-I'caz*, 251; *Şualar*, 122; *Asâ-yı Mûsa*, 121.
33. *Muhâkemat*, 115-6; *Mektûbat*, 214-5; *Sözler*, 179-81.
34. *İşaratü'l-I'caz*, 291-2; *Lem'alar*, 92-7; *Sözler*, 8-14.

create any actions; on the contrary, his partial will and power make it possible for him only to 'acquire' actions. Thus, it is Divine will and determining that play the dominant role in man's actions. For men can will nothing so long as God does not will it. Man's will is therefore invalid before Divine will and bears no meaning. The oath God's Messenger (PBUH) used, that he was "in the hand of Divine power," is a proof that everything is under the disposal of Divine will and power. Said Nursi said, like Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, that belief in God necessitates belief in Divine Determining, and admitted that it is difficult to understand the relationship between man's partial will and Divine Determining. However, he pointed out that not understanding the relationship between them did not show the absence of will, and indicated that it is necessary to establish man's accountability. To conclude, he shared the view of the majority of the Sunnis, that "although man possesses a partial will, it is God Who creates his actions."[35]

D. Prophethood

Said Nursi considered prophethood to be the source of all good and beauty, and tried to relate it to Godhead. In his view, there is an elevated God Who created the universe, and it is unthinkable that He would not make Himself known to His creatures. This necessitates the institution of prophethood. For it is only possible to make God known to men and convey His commands to them through prophethood, therefore everyone who believes in God has to believe in the institution of prophethood. Said Nursi thus saw prophethood as a manifestation of Godhead, and as an institution necessary for saving man from animality, and preferred to prove prophethood through reasoned proofs rather than narrated ones. One may summarize as follows the proof of prophethood he mentioned:

Since man, a social being, possesses besides the ability to use the reason on various levels, base senses like lust and the instinctual soul, he is need of a universal will which will inform him correctly about the laws ordering belief, worship, and social relations, and this is the Shari'a, brought by the Prophet (PBUH). The Messenger who brings the Shari'a both proves he is a Messenger through miracles, and becomes a model to other men through practising the Shari'a. By virtue of their being Divine acts and addressing the senses, Said Nursi says it is impossible to deny miracles, and that miracles have two chief aims. The first is to demonstrate that the persons through whom they are shown are Divine Messengers and to get people to affirm them; and the second is to be models or examples for people, in order to encourage social development, and urge them to achieve similar acts. In his view, what lies at the base of the civilization which man has reached today are inspirations arising from miracles. The miracles of the prophets Yusuf and Sulayman described in the Qur'an, have inspired men with the possibility of achieving the bringing close of things like sound, smell, and images that are far away.[36]

35. *İşaratü'l-I'caz*, 123-4; *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, 57-8, 81-2; *Lem'alar*, 219; *Şualar*, 6; *Asâ-yı Mûsa*, 52-3.
36. *İşaratü'l-I'caz*, 162-3, 310-12; *Muhakemat*, 122-7.

Said Nursi says that numerous prophets have come and gone in the history of humanity, and that the miracles they displayed formed evidences for the prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH); the attributes found in the former prophets being present in God's Messenger (PBUH) was proof that he was a true prophet.[37]

Other evidences for the prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH) mentioned in the Risale-i Nur are these: his being known as 'the Trustworthy' by those around him, and despite being fiercely opposed, his conveying the message of Islam fearlessly regardless of the consequences; his attributes and predictions of his prophethood being mentioned in previous scriptures such as the Torah, Gospels, and Psalms; his elevated morals and conduct; his worship being of the very highest degree; his offering the most convincing and reasonable explanations for beings and events; his call finding a response in people, and its drawing them; the Shari'a he brought being a mine of wisdom; his civilizing in a short time a savage and idolatrous people and making them a model generation decked out with the very finest morals; all these are evidences that he was a true prophet.[38]

After mentioning the above evidences, which are found in detail in the discussions on prophethood in the books of *kalām* and in the books dealing with the evidences of prophethood, Said Nursi says that the most important proof of prophethood is the performance of miracles, and close on a thousand may be found in the Qur'an.

Bediuzzaman divides the miracles of Muhammad (PBUH) into two sorts, those that occurred before his prophetic mission, *irhasat*, and the rest; and he divided the second sort into various groups. He categorized them as the miracles that occurred during his life and after his death, those connected with his person and those outside his person, spiritual miracles, and those related to materiality and creation.[39] In this way, he repeated the categorization found in the books on the evidences of prophethood.[40]

Said Nursi states that the wonder-working (*keramet*) of saints is true and a Divine act, and that those who display it may know that it will occur through them. So long as there is no necessity, it is harmful to perform wonder-working, for it is for various purposes like guiding followers and the people and strengthening their faith.[41] With these views Bediuzzaman follows the Sunni line exactly.

E. The hereafter

Said Nursi says concerning the hereafter that what all Muslims should believe is this:

"After human beings die, their spirits depart for another realm. Their bodies rot

37. *İşaratü'l-I'caz*, 190-3; *Sözler*, 221-2, 235-49; *Mektûbat*, 177-8.
38. *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, 23-6; *Sözler*, 219-27, 539-42; *Lem'alar*, 53, 319; *Şualar*, 527; *Mektûbat*, 180-5.
39. *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, 22; *Muhakemat*, 147; *Mektûbat*, 84; *Şualar*, 526; *İşaratü'l-I'caz*, 226.
40. See, Yusuf Şevki Yavuz, "Delâilü'n-Nübüvve," *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, ix, 115-8.
41. *Mektûbat*, 47-9, 330-2; *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, 192.

except for a minute cell from the base of the spine[42] which will act as a seed. It remains intact, and on the Day of Resurrection God Almighty will create the human body out of it and return its spirit to it."[43]

According to Said Nursi, however much God's existence is rendered necessary by the existence of the universe, so God's existence renders necessary the world of the hereafter.[44] In addition to mentioning the evidences for the existence of the hereafter in the Qur'an, he touches on the evidences discussed in the books of *kalām*, and says that the facts that those who obey God are not rewarded in this world and rebellious not punished, and justice is not carried out; and that man has an innate desire to live forever; and that some of the Divine Names pertain to the hereafter; and that all the revealed religions teach the existence of the hereafter; and other such matters, all make the hereafter necessary, and that according to reason too the hereafter is possible. He also says rightly that those who do not believe in the hereafter cannot be saved in this world from the unhappiness resulting from feeling they will be annihilated for ever, while owing to the joy experienced at the thought of living for ever, those who believe are happy and suffer no distress or crisis.[45]

According to Bediuzzaman, since the Divine attributes require that man will live for ever, the world of the hereafter will be eternal; Heaven and Hell will be everlasting, and the believers will remain in Paradise eternally, and the unbelievers in Hell. The unbelievers remaining perpetually in Hell is a bounty for them. For they could also be eliminated, and it is better to exist than not to exist, even if it is in torment. Although, basing it on various evidences, he says that Hell has to be eternal, favouring a view that emerged in the 2nd century of the Hijra and was later favoured by Ibn al-'Arabi, Bediuzzaman said that as recompense for the good works they had performed in this world, the unbelievers would become accustomed to the torment, and thus Hell would in one meaning cease being a place of torture for them.[46]

F. Signs of the end of the world

Said Nursi said that doomsday could break forth as the result of any of the heavenly bodies colliding and the world consequently breaking up into pieces in the vast emptiness of space. His views concerning the signs of the end of the world were as follows:

Like the allegorical verses of the Qur'an, narrations about the signs of the end of time are figurative and need to be interpreted. He therefore interpreted some of these. The Mahdi will appear before the end of the world in order to save belief, apply the Shari'a, and in order to serve religion, unite with the Christians. He will be a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Although Mahdis

42. See, Yusuf Şevki Yavuz, "Acbü'z-Zeneb," *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, i, 310-20.
43. *Sözler*, 574-5; *İşaratü'l-I'caz*, 62.
44. *Lem'alar*, 337-8.
45. *İşaratü'l-I'caz*, 58-63; *Sözler*, 57-81, 128-30, 490-1; *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, 34-5, 42-3, 119, 191, 203; *Asâ-yı Mûsa*, 27-36; *Şualar*, 514.
46. *Mektûbat*, 71-3, 360; *Lem'alar*, 151; *Sözler*, 468-71; *Asâ-yı Mûsa*, 42-3; *Şualar*, 193.

have appeared every century to serve belief, the Mahdi who will appear at the end of time will include the Risale-i Nur in his programme, and publish it. The Hadiths about the Mahdi and the Sufyan infer that two vast atheistic currents will spread, one of which will attempt to eliminate Islam and the Mahdi will destroy it together with the collective personality of the Sufyan and its hypocrisy; Christianity, which consists of the collective personality of Jesus, will defeat the other atheistic current, which springs from materialist philosophy, and will finally be transformed into a sort of Islam; Jesus, who is physically present in the heavens, will descend and lead this movement. This should be understood as Jesus killing the Dajjal not in the physical sense, but by defeating the atheist currents and destroying them.[47]

Gog and Magog are the Mongols and Manchurians. They have several times laid waste the face of the earth. Socialism came into being as a result of the French Revolution. This current, which destroyed everything sacred, was transformed into Bolshevism, which denied all religious and moral values. This in turn gave rise to anarchy, and the place of anarchy is backward, pillaging tribes. And these are the Manchurian and Mongol tribes, against which the Great Wall of China was built.[48]

Thus, in interpreting verses and Hadiths about the signs of the end of time, Said Nursi was following the tradition begun by Taftazani. He also established a tie between the Mahdi and the Risale-i Nur. It is noteworthy that there are similarities between his interpretations of the coming of Jesus and those of Elmalı Muhammad Hamdi Yazır.[49]

G. Belief, sin, accusations of disbelief

1. The definition and nature of belief

Bediuzzaman shared Elmalı Hamdi's view of belief, defined as "consisting of affirming in detail the essentials of religion that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) brought, and in summary fashion the revealed truths other than the essentials."[50] He considered it necessary that people should possess freedom and strength so that they could be held answerable through belief. Another condition of this was to be aware of the call of God's Messenger. Those unaware of it are not answerable if they believe in things other than God's existence and unity, and will not therefore be punished in the hereafter.[51] Since at the end of time, indifference towards religion will prevail, in one sense oppressed Christians are counted as people who live in a period which receives no prophetic message (*fetret*). Both human will is important for belief to be valid, and Divine will is important. For God bestows the light of belief on those of His servants whom He wishes.[52]

47. *Şualar*, 373-4, 486-7; *Mektûbat*, 53-5, 411-3; *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 49-50, 57-8, 75; *Sikke-i Tasdik-i Gaybî*, 9-10.
48. *Lem'alar*, 104-5; *Sözler*, 319-20; *Şualar*, 494.
49. Yazır, Elmalılı Hamdi, *Hak Dini Kur'an Dili*, ii, 1112-3; v, 3288; Yusuf Şevki Yavuz, "Elmalılı Muhammed Hamdi," *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, xi, 61.
50. Yazır, Elmalılı Hamdi, *Hak Dini Kur'an Dili*, i, 179-80; *İşaratü'l-I'caz*, 44.
51. *Mektûbat*, 310-1, 360-1; *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 75-6.
52. *İşaratü'l-I'caz*, 44-5; *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, 68-9.

Said Nursi was of the view that the strength of belief could fluctuate. It could increase or decrease in relation to the abundance and certainty of the evidences of belief, or their fewness and vagueness. He used the classic classification of the three degrees of belief, 'knowledge of certainty,' 'vision of certainty,' and 'absolute certainty,'[53] used by Islamic scholars, and considered it necessary for those who wanted to attain to them to perform good works.[54] All believers are obliged to comply with the Divine commands if they want to be saved.

Said Nursi stated that Islam means submission, and belief means affirmation, and that belief without Islam, and Islam without belief will not save a person in the hereafter.[55] He discusses also the positive effects of belief on man's life, and says that belief takes man to enlightenment and brotherhood, while denial plunges him into darkness and enmity. It is because of this that Western civilization, which is dominated by atheistic philosophy, cannot bring about brotherhood among humanity. Moreover, for those who believe death is the beginning of a new life, while for deniers it is the door to nothingness where life ends. Thus, believers are hopeful, while deniers pessimistic and in a painful state of mind.[56]

2. Sin

Bediuzzaman considered actions like murder, drinking alcohol, fornication, rebelling against parents, giving false testimony, and practising innovations to among the grievous sins. Following the Sunni view, he stated that those commit grievous sins, remain believers. For those who commit grievous sins are not denying the Divine commands, they are merely defeated by their souls due to laziness or heedlessness. But there is always a danger that those who are habitually lazy will fall into disbelief.[57]

3. Accusing of disbelief (tekfir)

In accordance with the Sunni view, Said Nursi said that the fundamentals of belief form a whole, and that someone who denies one or a number of them becomes an unbeliever. He speaks of two sorts of unbelievers: firstly those who deny God and all religions, and secondly, those who deny the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the religion of Islam, which he brought. However, in his opinion real unbelievers are those who deny God and all religions. One has to be extremely cautious when accusing others of unbelief. At a time non-Muslims were distinguished by their dress, Muslims who wore the same dress could not be accused of unbelief. The brimmed hat is an item of this dress. However, there is no doubt that those who subscribe to the beliefs of the unbelievers are themselves unbelievers.[58]

53. Yusuf Şevki Yavuz, "Ayne'l-yakîn," *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, iv, 269.
54. *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 15-6; *Sikke-i Tasdik-i Gaybî*, 26, 176.
55. *Mektûbat*, 31-2; *Barla Lahikası*, Istanbul 1987, 191.
56. *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, 23-4; *Sözler*, 15-6, 23-4; *İşaratü'l-I'caz*, 29-30; *Mektûbat*, 204-10; *Şualar*, 167-9.
57. *Barla Lahikası*, 179; *Lem'alar*, 70-3; *Mesnevi-i Nûriye*, 201.
58. *Sünûhat*, Istanbul 1977, 20; *İşaratü'l-I'caz*, 74; *Şualar*, 324; *Lem'alar*, 261; *Münazarat*, 71-2.

H. Politics (*İmamet-Hilafet*)

Said Nursi asserted that republicanism is in conformity with Islam, and cited the time of the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs as evidence for this. In his view, it was licit for the National Assembly to take on the Caliphate and in conformity with Islamic law. However, the Assembly had to ensure that any laws it passed conformed to Islamic law and had to draw them up in that way. So long as the secular republic, which separates the matters of religion and those of this world, afforded the freedom it recognized for those without religion to those who believe, it would not be practising irreligion, it would otherwise clearly be supporting irreligion.[59]

Conclusion

As a religious scholar belonging to the Sunni School, Said Nursi considered *'ilm al-kalām* (theology) to be inadequate in regard to the basic questions of faith, and was of the view that the Risale-i Nur answered this need of Muslims. For it had been inspired in his heart from the effulgence of the Qur'an. It was therefore free of error and discussed the Qur'anic truths. However, it should not be forgotten that a basic principle adopted by the Sunni scholars and distinguishing them from the Shi'a is that such writings have a human source, and outside the prophets no on is free of error (*ma'sum*). Nevertheless, he used the evidence and methods of the science of *kalām* when discussing the questions of belief. Concerning the problem of knowledge, Said Nursi recognized the acquisition of knowledge, but since he added intuitive knowledge and inspiration, dreams, taking omens from books, and the science of *jafr* to the senses, information, and intellect as sources of knowledge, his ideas differed from those of the scholars of *kalām*. He differed from Sunni scholars particularly by considering *jafr* to be among the sources of knowledge, which is based on narrations of Shi'i origin. In the philosophy of nature, he followed the Ash'ari school, and defended the theory of 'habit' put forward by Baqillani and Ghazzali, and rejected the principle of causality. Contemporary scholars have favoured causality and criticized the habit theory, and so Said Nursi's ideas have also been criticised indirectly.

In the question of God's existence, of the proofs of createdness, contingency, order, and inborn nature, which had been developed by scholars of *kalām* and Islamic philosophers since the 3rd century of the Hijra, Said Nursi emphasized the proof of order, as other contemporary scholars have also done. Concerning Divine unity, in addition to the proof called "temanu," he mentioned a proof the subject of which is all beings being members of species. On the subject of the Divine attributes, he followed Maturidi, proved the attributes related to creation, and interpreted the attributes called "haberî." He stated, like Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, that belief in Divine Determining was necessitated by belief in God. Also, although man has the power and will to act, all actions are created by God, thus it is God Who has the dominant role in man's actions.

59. *Münazarat*, 38-9; *Hutbe-i Şâmiye*, Istanbul 1960, 79. For Said Nursi's views on *kalam*, see, Harmancı, Abdülkadir, *Klasik Kelâm Problemleri Açısından Nur Risaleleri*, Istanbul, Marmara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü 1994.

Bediuzzaman interpreted prophethood as a manifestation of Godhead, said that miracles were the most important proof of prophethood, and had also been the source of inspiration of modern discoveries and inventions. He described some of the miracles of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which are mentioned in the books of evidences of his prophethood.

On the question of the hereafter, he expounded the evidences for it in the Qur'an and Sunna, and said too that man's sense of justice and desire for eternity are both important evidences for it. He stressed that belief in the hereafter made man happy, while denial induces in him a pessimistic state of mind, and although he proved the immortality of man's spirit, he criticized the 'calling up of spirits' practised in the West. He stated that Hell will be eternal, and repeated Ibn al-'Arabi's view that in time unbelievers would grow accustomed to the torments. By interpreting the Dajjal, one of the signs of the end of time, in the form of the atheistic currents which are the representatives of evil, he was following the tradition started by Taftazani. And on the subject of the coming of Jesus, his interpretations are similar to those in Elmalı Hamdi Yazır's Qur'anic commentary. There are also noteworthy similarities in their definitions of belief.

Bediuzzaman took the moderate stand always favoured by the Sunnis in the question of making accusations of disbelief, and invited people to act cautiously in this matter. Based on powerful evidences, he stated that people cannot be accused on unbelief for wearing the peaked cap.

Bediuzzaman considered republicanism to be lawful so long as it conforms to Islamic law, and said that if secularism recognized religious freedoms, it should not be counted as irreligion.

As was seen, in the Risale-i Nur Said Nursi dealt with just about all the questions of the science of *kalām*, and endeavoured to demonstrate and prove them. Thus, together with benefiting from the views of former Islamic scholars, he was a contemporary scholar who drew attention to the questions of belief through his discussions, which are in conformity with methods of the Holy Qur'an.

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